



TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE **EXECUTIVE**

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Executive to be held on Thursday, 15 July 2021 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Gloucester Square, Woking, Surrey GU21 6YL.

Please note the meeting will be filmed and will be broadcast live and subsequently as an archive on the Council's website (www.woking.gov.uk). The images and sound recording will also be used for training purposes within the Council. Generally, the public seating areas are not filmed. However, by entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed.

The Chairman of the meeting has the discretion to terminate or suspend filming, if in his/her opinion continuing to do so would prejudice the proceedings of the meeting or, on advice, considers that continued filming might infringe the rights of any individual.

As cameras are linked to the microphones, could Members ensure they switch their microphones on before they start to speak and off when finished and do not remove the cards which are in the microphones.

The agenda for the meeting is set out below.

JULIE FISHER
Chief Executive

AGENDA

PART I - PRESS AND PUBLIC PRESENT

1. Minutes

To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 17 June 2021 as published.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Urgent Business

To consider any business that the Chairman rules may be dealt with under Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

4. Declarations of Interest (Pages 5 - 6)

- (i) To receive declarations of interest from Members and Officers in respect of any item to be considered at the meeting.
- (ii) In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor A Azad declares a non-pecuniary interest in any items concerning the companies of which she is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that speaking and voting are permissible.
- (iii) In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor K M Davis declares a non-pecuniary interest in any items concerning the companies of which he is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that speaking and voting are permissible.
- (iv) In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor D Harlow declares a non-pecuniary interest in any items concerning the companies of which she is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that speaking and voting are permissible.
- (v) In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor C S Kemp declares a non-pecuniary interest in any items concerning the companies of which he is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that speaking and voting are permissible.
- (vi) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Julie Fisher, declares a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which she is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that Mrs Fisher may advise the Executive on those items.
- (vii) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Finance, Leigh Clarke, declares a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which she is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that Mrs Clarke may advise the Executive on those items.
- (viii) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Planning, Giorgio Framalicco, declares a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which he is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that Mr Framalicco may advise the Executive on those items.
- (ix) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Neighbourhood Services, Geoff McManus, declares a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which he is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that Mr McManus may advise the Executive on those items.
- (x) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Housing, Louise Strongitharm, declares a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which she is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that Mrs Strongitharm may advise the Executive on those items.
- (xi) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Finance, Leigh Clarke, declares a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning Woking Football Club and/or the GolDev Woking Limited development. The interest arises from (i) her husband having a small shareholding in Woking Football Club and (ii) being a Council-appointed director of Kingfield Community Sports Centre Limited. The interest is such that Mrs Clarke may advise the Executive on those items.

Questions

5. To deal with any written questions submitted under Section 3 of the Executive Procedure Rules. Copies of the questions and draft replies will be laid upon the table.

Matters for Recommendation

6. Housing Strategy EXE21-051 (Pages 7 - 54)
Reporting Person – Louise Strongitharm
7. Health and Wellbeing Strategy EXE21-016 (Pages 55 - 122)
Reporting Person – Julie Fisher

Matters for Determination

8. Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) EXE21-056 (Pages 123 - 168)
Reporting Person – Julie Fisher
9. Town Centre Masterplan EXE21-057 (Pages 169 - 192)
Reporting Person – Giorgio Framaliccio
10. Animal Welfare Policy EXE21-036 – to follow
Reporting Person – Emma Bourne
11. Equalities Annual Report - 2021 EXE21-027 (Pages 193 - 206)
Reporting Person – Julie Fisher
12. Treasury Management Annual Report 2020-21 EXE21-025 (Pages 207 - 218)
Reporting Person – Leigh Clarke
13. Risk Management and Business Continuity Annual Report EXE21-026 (Pages 219 - 224)
Reporting Person – Julie Fisher

Performance Management

14. Performance and Financial Monitoring Information
Please bring to the meeting your copy of the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book) April and May 2021.
15. Monitoring Reports - Projects EXE21-019 (Pages 225 - 228)
Reporting Person – Julie Fisher

AGENDA ENDS

Date Published - 7 July 2021

For further information regarding this agenda and arrangements for the meeting, please contact Julie Northcote on 01483 743053 or email julie.northcote@woking.gov.uk



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Schedule Referred to in Declaration of Interests

Council-appointed directorships

| Councillor A Azad | |
|---|---|
| Export House Limited | Thameswey Guest Houses Limited |
| Kingfield Community Sports Centre Limited | Thameswey Housing Limited |
| Rutland Woking (Carthouse Lane) Limited | Thameswey Limited |
| Rutland (Woking) Limited | Thameswey Maintenance Services Limited |
| Rutland Woking (Residential) Limited | Thameswey Solar Limited |
| Thameswey Central Milton Keynes Limited | Thameswey Sustainable Communities Limited |
| Thameswey Developments Limited | Victoria Square Residential Limited |
| Thameswey Energy Limited | VSW Hotel Limited |
| Victoria Square Woking Limited | |

| Councillor K M Davis | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Brookwood Cemetery Limited | LAC 2021 Limited |
| Brookwood Park Limited | Woking Necropolis and Mausoleum Limited |

| Councillor D Harlow | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Thameswey Guest Houses Limited | Thameswey Housing Limited |
| Thameswey Limited | |

| Councillor C S Kemp | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Kingfield Community Sports Centre Limited | Thameswey Housing Limited |
| Thameswey Guest Houses Limited | Thameswey Limited |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Julie Fisher, Chief Executive | |
| Victoria Square Woking Limited | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Leigh Clarke, Director of Finance | |
| Kingfield Community Sports Centre Limited | |

| | |
|---|-------------------------|
| Giorgio Framalicco, Director of Planning | |
| Export House Limited | Woking Shopping Limited |

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Geoff McManus, Director of Neighbourhood Services | |
| Export House Limited | Woking Shopping Limited |

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Louise Strongitharm, Director of Housing | |
| Rutland Woking (Carthouse Lane) Limited | Thamesway Developments Limited |
| Rutland Woking (Residential) Limited | Thamesway Guest Houses Limited |
| Rutland (Woking) Limited | Thamesway Housing Limited |
| Thamesway Limited | |

EXECUTIVE – 15 JULY 2021

HOUSING STRATEGY

Executive Summary

The Local Government Act 2003 requires all local housing authorities publish a Housing Strategy setting out a vision for housing in its area, including objectives, targets and policies on how the authority intends to manage and deliver its strategic housing role. The Strategy provides an overarching framework against which the authority considers and formulates other policies on more specific housing issues.

Housing plays an important role in the health, social, environmental and economic wellbeing of everyone who lives in the Borough. This Housing Strategy sets out the Council's vision for the period 2021 - 2026, with an overall focus on achieving an increase in the supply of affordable housing whilst making the best use of the existing stock; improving the customer journey across the service; and enabling residents to fulfil their potential.

The Housing Strategy covers the scope of our Housing Services and is designed to complement our other policies, such as the Local Plan and Corporate Plan. The strategic priorities contained in the Housing Strategy are:

- To provide well designed, high quality homes that are affordable and meet local needs;
- To prevent homelessness and help those in housing need;
- To help people to achieve independence and wellbeing;
- To deliver an improved housing service to our tenants and leaseholders;
- To enhance choice, standards and quality within the private rented sector.

A 4-week consultation process has been undertaken with 278 online surveys received. 85.9% agreed with the overall Strategy with the key themes including the need for more coverage on sustainability/energy efficiency; support for making more efficient use of existing stock; support for the planned changes to housing management and maintenance and a clearer prioritisation of social rented homes.

The Strategy is underpinned by a more detailed action plan to outline how the Council intends to deliver its strategic housing role.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

- the Housing Strategy 2021-2026, as attached to the report, be approved; and**
- the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, be delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Strategy and to update the action plan as required.**

Reasons for Decision

Reason: The Council has a legal duty to have an up-to-date Housing Strategy in place.

| |
|---|
| The item(s) above will need to be dealt with by way of a recommendation to Council. |
|---|

Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Louise Strongitharm, Director of Housing
Email: louise.strongitharm@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3732

Contact Person: Jon Herbert, Strategic Housing and Development Manager
Email: jon.herbert@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3546

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Debbie Harlow
Email: cllrdebbie.harlow@woking.gov.uk

Shadow Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ann-Marie Barker
Email: cllrann-marie.barker@woking.gov.uk

Date Published: 7 July 2021

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council to publish a housing strategy setting out a vision for housing in its area and identify objectives and priorities to meet the current and future housing needs of the local population. In England, local housing strategies are currently prepared by local housing authorities.
- 1.2 Since the last Housing Strategy was adopted in 2011, there have been significant changes in Government policy and legislation that have affected the housing sector. In addition to this, there remain several consultations, strategies and policy papers that are in the process of being set out by Government, and will play a part in shaping the future.
- 1.3 A Social Housing White Paper was published by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government on 17 November 2020, presenting a charter of seven commitments social housing residents should be able to expect from their landlord. The overarching themes are building and resident safety, and resident voice.
- 1.4 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced a wide range of reforms with effect from 1st April 2013 aimed at reducing public expenditure on benefits and using the welfare system to incentivise people into employment. A number of these have had an impact on homelessness and the availability, and sustainability, of affordable housing.
- 1.5 There have also been a number of local policy updates and changes, including the joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2015, the emerging Site Allocations DPD, the Housing Allocations Policy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

2.0 Draft Housing Strategy 2021 - 2026

- 2.1 Woking is a popular place to live. The population of Woking is 100,793 based on mid-year estimates (ONS) 2019, a 12.2% increase since 2001. However, the success of the area brings challenges. House prices in the Borough are well above the national average leading to affordability issues for local people and key workers.
- 2.2 As at February 2021, the average house price in Woking was £420,792, which is nearly double the national average of £250,341. As of March 2020, full-time employees could typically expect to spend around 10.17 times their workplace-based annual earnings on purchasing a home. This is significantly higher than the national average of 7.84.
- 2.3 As at 1st April 2021, there were a total of 1,108 applicants on Woking's Housing Register. The Housing Register shows that the greatest need is for 1 bed units at 41%, but there is also a significant need for 2 and 3+ bed homes at 31% and 28% respectively.
- 2.4 The Housing Strategy covers the scope of our Housing Services and is designed to complement our other policies, such as the Local Plan.
- 2.5 The Strategy includes five strategic priorities as follows:
 - To provide well designed, high quality homes that are affordable and meet local needs;
 - To prevent homelessness and help those in housing need;
 - To help people to achieve independence and wellbeing;
 - To deliver an improved housing service to our tenants and leaseholders;
 - To enhance choice, standards and quality within the private rented sector.

- 2.8 Progress against the Housing Strategy will be monitored by the respective teams within Housing Services and Planning, with additional monitoring provided through the Housing Task Group. The Task Group feeds into the development of a range of housing strategies and policies, while also monitoring the performance and delivery of key housing projects.
- 2.9 The Housing Strategy is underpinned by a more detailed action plan to outline how the Council intends to deliver its strategic housing role. The Action Plan is intended to be a live document, which will be subject to continuous review and updating to ensure it remains effective and current. Updates will be published on the Council's website.

3.0 Corporate Strategy

- 3.1 Improving the health and wellbeing of all residents - housing plays an important role in the health, social, environmental and economic wellbeing of everyone who lives in the Borough. Good quality, decent and affordable homes contribute significantly to health and wellbeing. Strategic Priority 1 focuses on delivering suitable housing for residents that is truly affordable and meets local needs.

Strategic Priority 3 focusses on the provision of good quality housing support services that promote independence. This is key to the Council's preventative strategies to enable vulnerable people to live successfully and independently in the community. Woking Borough Council's focus is on supporting customers not just to resolve their housing issues, but also encouraging them to improve their health and wellbeing.

- 3.2 Reducing Social Inequality - Woking has an acute need for more affordable housing of all types, sizes and tenures and the demand for affordable housing far exceeds supply, with local people finding it increasingly difficult to afford to stay in the Borough. Strategic Priority 1 focuses on delivering suitable housing for residents that is truly affordable and meets local needs, including addressing affordability issues for local people and key workers.

Strategic Priority 2 seeks to tackle homelessness and its root causes. Successful homelessness prevention has been the main aim of Woking's Housing Options approach for many years and it will need to remain so with the added duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The team use a range of other tools to prevent and address homelessness, including family mediation, home visits, negotiation with landlords, landlord incentives, prevention funding to help with rent arrears and floating support. We will continue to prevent homelessness using a range of tools available, including the Housing Options Floating Support Service and outreach services, while further developing Personal Housing Plans (PHPs) to become more holistic and with regular reviews/updates.

- 3.3 Engaging our Communities - The draft Housing Strategy has been distributed for widespread consultation to tenants, those on the housing register and the wider population of Woking through Engagement HQ, emails and social media. The views of our residents, partners and stakeholders are very important to us, so this has been an ideal opportunity to engage with local people to help shape housing priorities for the future of our communities. Strategic Priority 4 includes a clear commitment to engaging tenants and leaseholders more in the future of the Housing Service.
- 3.4 Sustainable development - Over 97% of the Council's housing stock meets the Decent Homes standard in 2020/2021. In addition, the energy efficiency of Council owned homes has risen over the past 4 years to 69.1% in 2020/21. Strategic Priority 1 focuses on delivering more affordable homes built to high design standards. Strategic Priority 4 aims to improve energy efficiency amongst Council-owned stock through routine maintenance programmes and new development schemes. Strategic Priority 5 will ensure that our private rented properties continue to meet the revised standards around energy performance and room sizes, as per legislative changes set out in the Housing and Planning Act 2016 expanding Council responsibilities in this regard.

- 3.5 Strengthening Partnerships - This Strategy outlines how the Council will work in partnership with others to meet the targets set out in its Local Development Framework (LDF), 'Woking 2027' and Core Strategy with regards to affordable housing provision in the Borough. Strategic Priority 1 aims to deliver affordable homes through working in strengthened partnership with Thamesway, Registered Providers and developers, as well as identifying new-build opportunities on council-owned land. Strategic Priority 2 continues our working to support vulnerable residents through partnership working with local partners, including York Road Project, Women's Support Centre, Citizens Advice Woking, Your Sanctuary, local foodbanks, Surrey County Council, Woking MIND and JobCentre +. Strategic Priority 3 highlights that partnership working with other statutory and voluntary agencies is key to helping people achieve independence and wellbeing and working in partnership with a range of health and social care colleagues runs through this priority. Strategic Priority 5 details the maintaining and improvement of working relationships with Lettings Agents and Landlords, including holding a yearly Private Sector Landlord Forum to disseminate best practice.
- 3.6 Effective Use of Resources - This Strategy outlines how the Council will maximise resources to meet the targets set out in its Local Development Framework (LDF), 'Woking 2027' and Core Strategy with regards to affordable housing provision in the Borough. In achieving the aims of Strategic Priority 1, the Council will utilise its recent status as an Investment Partner with Homes England to secure grant funding to help deliver affordable housing development. The Council will also explore new funding models, such as "income-strip" finance. We will also undertake a strategic review of the Council's temporary accommodation portfolio to identify any future development opportunities, while looking for opportunities arising from the asset management strategy and property review to develop more affordable housing and exploring how to further encourage tenants who are under-occupying Council homes to move to smaller homes. Our work in the area of homelessness and rough sleeping will continue to utilise a range of tools available, including the Housing Options Floating Support Service and outreach services. A key element of Strategic Priority 4 is to bring housing and asset management services back in-house and re-tender the repairs and maintenance contracts, thereby delivering best value for tenants and leaseholders. Strategic Priority 5 seeks to make use of existing housing by bringing empty properties back into use, as well as reviewing our IT systems for Private Sector Housing to deliver a more efficient and customer-friendly service.

4.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 4.1 The Housing Strategy provides clear direction and focus with respect to its strategic objectives for Housing Services upon which future financial decisions can be based.
- 4.2 The Strategy itself does not commit the Council to additional costs. Any actions requiring additional budget will be presented to the Executive and/or Council for a decision.
- 4.3 The risks associated with delivering the Housing Strategy are clearly set out in the Action Plan.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 4.4 The Housing Strategy reflects the Council's ambitions to promote equality and address inequalities in Woking. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed.
- 4.5 The Housing Strategy will support staff in understanding the strategic direction of the Council's Housing Services.

Legal

- 4.6 The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council to publish a housing strategy setting out a vision for housing in its area and identify objectives and priorities to meet the current and

future housing needs of the local population. In England, local housing strategies are currently prepared by local housing authorities. This strategy ensures compliance with this duty and in any event it must be good practice to devise a strategy and to involve relevant stakeholders in its preparation.

5.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 5.1 The Draft Housing Strategy has been shaped through focus groups with staff, discussions at Housing Task Group and through an Overview and Scrutiny Committee Housing Services Review during 2020/21.
- 5.2 Formal consultation on the Draft Housing Strategy was launched on 21 May 2021 for a 4-week period. The consultation used the Council's new online platform (Woking Community Forum) to host a survey, along with an Ideas Board. The consultation was promoted via social media channels and the Council's website and distributed via email to Council tenants and leaseholders, applicants on the Housing Register, partner organisations, the Residents Panel and local community groups and residents associations.
- 5.3 The consultation closed on 18 June 2021. 278 people responded to the online survey, 21 suggestions were posted on the Ideas Board and 3 responses were received via letter/email. 95.6% of respondents were residents of the Borough.
- 5.4 The survey showed that 85.9% of respondents agreed with the overall direction of the Strategy, with the strongest support being for priorities 2 (to prevent homelessness and help those in housing need) and 3 (to help people to achieve independence and wellbeing) (at 83.5% and 80.1% respectively).
- 5.5 The key themes coming out of the consultation included the need for more coverage on sustainability/energy efficiency; support for making more efficient use of existing stock (including the focus on empty homes and downsizing incentives); support for the planned changes to housing management and maintenance and a clearer prioritisation of social rented homes. There were also comments made that the Strategy needed to set clearer targets and actions.
- 5.6 A number of respondents commented on planning policy matters, including town centre development and infrastructure delivery, which are beyond the remit of this document. These matters will be picked up later this year through the Town Centre Masterplan.
- 5.7 In response to the consultation outcome, the following changes have been made to the Draft Housing Strategy:
 - A detailed action plan has been inserted.
 - Additional actions and milestones have been added around sustainability within the action plan.
 - The Strategy now states that the priority will be to deliver social rented homes where possible.
- 5.8 A statement of consultation, summarising all comments received and the Council's response, will be published on the Woking Community Forum portal and on the Housing Strategy webpage, so that consultees can see how their suggestions have fed into the strategy document.

REPORT ENDS

Housing Strategy 2021-2026



WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL

Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026

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Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce Woking Borough Council's Housing Strategy 2021-2026, setting out our vision for housing in the borough and identifying objectives and strategic priorities to meet the current and future housing needs of the local population.

Whilst this strategy has been developed in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, it has an overall focus on achieving an increase in the supply of affordable housing and continuing to provide high quality housing services in Woking.

This is an exciting time for housing in the Borough as we look to bring our landlord services back in-house next year. Good quality, decent and affordable homes can contribute immeasurably to health and wellbeing and, as a forward thinking authority, we will be working with partners and other agencies on innovative models of affordable housing delivery. Our focus is not only on solutions to housing issues but, more holistically, also on resident wellbeing and helping people to live safe and independent lives through a range of accommodation options.

The Housing Strategy is supported by the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Housing Allocations Policy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy and seeks to concentrate on developing affordable housing while making the best use of the existing stock; improving the customer journey across the service; and enabling residents to fulfil their potential.

This is an ambitious strategy that embraces the challenges facing Woking Borough Council as we work towards providing safe and affordable housing. These are challenges we are determined to address and overcome in order to ensure Woking remains a vibrant, inclusive, sustainable and healthy place to live and work.

I would like to thank all staff, residents, partners and other interested parties who have contributed towards the development of this strategy, and look forward to its implementation and positive impact going forward.

Councillor Debbie Harlow - Portfolio Holder for Housing

1. Introduction

Welcome to Woking Borough Council's Housing Strategy for 2021 - 2026, a strategy geared towards providing safe, affordable, high quality homes and working to ensure that the residents of Woking thrive. This is an important document for the Council, recognising that housing plays a major role in the health, social, environmental and economic well-being of everyone who lives in the borough.

Woking is changing and has seen significant development in recent years. With its outstanding transport links and access to attractive green spaces, Woking is a popular place to live. However, the success of the area does bring with it challenges. House prices in the Borough are well above the national average leading to affordability issues for local people and key workers.

This strategy demonstrates the Council's ambition for, and commitment to, more affordable housing provision over the next 5 years that is high quality, managed well and provides opportunities for people and communities to develop and prosper. With major changes coming in how the Council manages its housing stock, the Strategy also conveys the Council's commitment to engaging residents in the future delivery of its housing services.

This strategy is intended to be a live document with opportunities to update action plans annually. This is to ensure that Woking Borough Council is responding to emerging legislation and policies and the challenges and opportunities that arise over the next 5 years.

2. About Woking Borough

Woking Borough is situated in the heart of Surrey, just 25 miles from central London. As well as being close to the capital, the borough is located 15 and 20 miles from Heathrow and Gatwick respectively, making it a very popular and attractive place to live.

The population of Woking is 100,793 based on mid-year estimates (ONS) 2019, a 12.2% increase since 2001. Most residents live in Woking's well defined urban area and 80% of residents refer to "Woking" as their town or nearest town. The borough is 60% green belt and the town itself is surrounded by open countryside, including thousands of acres of woods and heathland across Horsell Common.

Key facts about housing in Woking include:

- As at February 2021, the average house price in Woking was £420,792, which is nearly double the national average of £250,341.
- According to the ONS, the number of households in Woking was 39,460 in 2018 and this is projected to increase by 1.1% in 2028 to 39,900 households.
- In Woking, as of March 2020, full-time employees could typically expect to spend around 10.17 times their workplace-based annual earnings on purchasing a home. This is significantly higher than the national average of 7.84. The median gross annual workplace-based earnings in Woking is £39,325.
- In Woking, the number of people on Universal Credit was 6,889 as at 11 March 2021, which has increased from 6,060 in August 2020.
- As at 1st April 2021, there were a total of 1,108 applicants on Woking's Housing Register. The Housing Register shows that the greatest need is for 1 bed units at 41%, but there is also a significant need for 2 and 3+ bed homes at 31% and 28% respectively.
- The Council owns 3,370 dwellings (inclusive of shared ownership and temporary accommodation dwellings), plus a further 83 Thamesway Housing Limited (THL) dwellings managed by New Vision Homes (NVH) - to which WBC is able to nominate persons from the Housing Register. In addition, there are approximately 2,050 housing association properties in the Borough and a further 100 THL properties (which are affordable but not managed by NVH).

Further details on housing in Woking can be found in the Council's regular [Housing Facts and Figures report](#).

3. Achievements

As the Council embarks on its next strategy, it is important to reflect on its housing achievements over the last 5 years. Key successes include:

- In September 2020, the Council achieved Investment Partner status with Homes England, meaning it is pre-qualified to bid for funding towards affordable housing developments. Through this, the Council secured grant funding towards the Hale End Court Extra Care Housing scheme in Old Woking, which is due to complete in autumn 2021.
- The Council has committed to a multi-million pound regeneration project to transform the centre of Sheerwater into a thriving, sustainable community and an attractive new neighbourhood. The scheme will deliver 1,200 new homes, of which almost half will be affordable homes. The first 92 homes will be completed this summer.
- In the past 2 years, the Council has built 11 new, high quality council homes with exceptionally high levels of insulation. The homes follow a fabric first approach, which are estimated to reduce carbon emissions by 50%. The Council has also converted 7 disused common rooms into affordable homes with some being fully wheelchair accessible.
- The Council has delivered 2 new self-contained, modern temporary accommodation schemes (providing 47 units), as well as renovating the existing temporary accommodation schemes.
- As part of the Covid-19 pandemic response, the Council has worked with York Road Project to accommodate over 160 homeless people under the Government's 'Everyone In' initiative and is committed to continue supporting them. To assist this, the Council secured funding for move-on accommodation and staffing costs to support rough sleepers, or those at risk of rough sleeping as part of the Government's Next Steps Accommodation Programme. The Council now has a new team dedicated to supporting rough sleepers and finding move-on accommodation in order to reduce and eliminate rough sleeping.
- The Council set up a Selective Licensing scheme in the Canalside ward to raise the standard of private rented accommodation. 865 licences have been issued under the scheme, with 52% of properties visited being improved following inspection.
- Since October 2017, 338 private rented properties have joined the Council's Let's Rent service which assists homeless households find a new home.
- Since 2016/17, 227 empty homes have been brought back into use.
- Over 97% of the Council's housing stock meets the Decent Homes standard in 2020/2021. In addition, the energy efficiency of Council owned homes has risen over the past 4 years to 69.1% in 2020/21.
- Thamesway Housing, the Council's housing company, have launched its innovative Earn Your Deposit scheme to help aspiring home owners to buy their own home.

4. Policy Context

National Policy

The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced, including for the delivery of affordable homes. The NPPF includes a definition of affordable homes, which is supplied in **Annexe 1**, and includes affordable housing for rent; starter homes; discounted market sales housing; and other affordable routes to home ownership.

A [Social Housing White Paper](#) was published by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government on 17 November 2020, presenting a charter of seven commitments social housing residents should be able to expect from their landlord. The overarching themes are building and resident safety, and resident voice.

[The Housing Act 1996, Part 7](#), is the primary legislation governing homelessness. It has seen several changes over the years but the most recent, fundamental and far-reaching are the amendments brought about by the [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#). This introduced new requirements to "Prevent" and "Relieve" homelessness and came into force on 3rd April 2018. The Act represents a strategic change from the Housing Options model to an emphasis on improving how the Council engages with and supports its customers. The focus is on developing a more holistic approach to preventing and resolving homelessness by further developing Personal Housing Plans (PHPs). The main aim is to increase early interventions, which achieve more sustainable outcomes for customers.

The Government has committed to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminating it completely by 2027. In the [Spending Review 2020](#) the Chancellor confirmed an additional £254 million of resource funding to tackle rough sleeping and homelessness. The Government also committed £87 million of capital funding in 2021/22 to support the delivery of long-term accommodation for rough sleepers. Subsequently, a further £310 million [Homelessness Prevention Grant](#) was announced, taking the total resource funding for rough sleeping and homelessness in 2021/22 to over £750 million.

The [Welfare Reform Act 2012](#) introduced a wide range of reforms with effect from 1st April 2013 aimed at reducing public expenditure on benefits and using the welfare system to incentivise people into employment. A number of these have had an impact on homelessness and the availability, and sustainability, of affordable housing. The key elements of reform included:

- Local Housing Allowance (LHA) reductions, including total LHA caps and the limiting of LHA to the 30th percentile of market rents.
- Benefit Cap - limiting the maximum benefits that a family can receive.
- Spare Room Subsidy ('Bedroom Tax') reduces housing benefit entitlement to social housing tenants considered to be under occupying their homes.
- Shared Accommodation Rate limit applied to single young people up to the age of 35.
- Transfer of responsibility for Social Fund payments to local authorities and to Council budgets.

- Disability Benefit changes and the replacement of Council Tax Benefit with local Council Tax support, reducing benefit income to a wide range of working age adults.
- Introduction of Universal Credit to provide a single streamlined benefit paid to residents directly rather than to their landlords. Full Service Universal Credit went live in Woking Borough in October 2018.

Local Policies

The Council's vision "**towards tomorrow today**" is supported by a statement of intent about shaping the Borough's future, comprising a number of value aims under the three key thematic areas of **People, Place and Us** (the organisation), as follows:

- **People** - working to improve the health and wellbeing of our community;
- **Place** - creating a sustainable community which has a strong identity and is a place where people want to be;
- **Us** - looking ahead and, along with our partners, seeking opportunities to shape and improve the services provided to the community.

More details on the vision, aims and above mentioned themes can be found on the Woking Borough Council [website](#). A new Corporate Plan has been adopted for 2021/22, with a 5-year Corporate Strategy planned from next year following extensive resident engagement.

The Council's "[Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020- 2024](#)" sets out how it will work with partners to address homelessness in the Woking Borough and support residents in housing crisis. Actions will be targeted at delivering on the following four strategic priorities:

1. To prevent homelessness and offer early help
2. To provide a range of accommodation options
3. To support vulnerable residents through partnership working
4. To reduce rough sleeping.

Woking Borough Council's [Housing Allocations Policy](#) outlines how the Council allocates social and affordable rented properties and makes nominations to Housing Associations within the borough.

A comprehensive Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Woking, within the framework of the North West Surrey Integrated Care Partnership (NWSICP), is also currently being developed. It will focus on health creation and how its policies and decision making on all matters can support the creation of healthy and resilient communities in Woking.

This is a challenging time for housing, with the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic being acutely felt and local house prices remaining out of reach for many. There remain several consultations, strategies and policy papers that are in the process of being set out by Government that will play a part in shaping the future. This Strategy outlines how the Council will work in partnership with others, and maximise resources to meet the targets set out in its Local Development Framework (LDF), '[Woking 2027](#)' and [Core Strategy](#) with regards to housing provision in the Borough.

5. Strategic Priorities

The Council has identified five strategic priorities for housing over the next five years, which are as follows:

1. To provide well designed, high quality homes that are affordable and meet local needs;
2. To prevent homelessness and help those in housing need;
3. To help people to achieve independence and wellbeing;
4. To deliver an improved housing service to our tenants and leaseholders;
5. To enhance choice, standards and quality within the private rented sector.

The next sections will elaborate more on these strategic priorities, including identifying key actions that will be undertaken over the life of the strategy.

1.1 Strategy Priority 1 - To provide well designed, high quality homes that are affordable and meet local needs

Good quality, decent and affordable homes contribute significantly to health and wellbeing. Woking has an acute need for more affordable housing of all types, sizes and tenures and the demand for affordable housing far exceeds supply, with local people finding it increasingly difficult to afford to stay in the Borough. This strategic priority focuses on delivering suitable housing for residents that is truly affordable and meets local needs.

There is a need for a range of property and tenure types within the supply of affordable housing. Whilst the greatest need evidenced on the Council's Housing Register is for smaller homes, applicants are waiting longer for larger properties. 191 households are also registered for shared ownership schemes in the Borough, but there have been no new schemes for over two years, showing a gap in the local market. With affordable homes being so scarce, it is vital that the Council makes the best use of existing stock, including encouraging and supporting tenants to downsize when they no longer need a family-sized home.

Woking Borough Council's policies require all new housing development to contribute towards the delivery of affordable housing. However, since 2019/20, only 57 new build affordable homes have been delivered in Woking. When combined with relets of existing stock, there are typically only 100 affordable homes being let each year to applicants on the Housing Register. These figures clearly demonstrate the stark shortage of affordable homes and the resulting long waiting times faced by applicants.

One of the key difficulties facing development in Woking is the shortage of developable land. Woking is a relatively small borough, with 60% of land being designated as green belt. The proximity of Woking to London, and its other excellent transport connections, mean that developers are attracted to Woking and there is also competition over land use between commercial and residential development.

Much of Woking's recent development is concentrated in the town centre to promote economic growth and to protect the green belt. However, such sites attract high land values which in turn reduces the viability of affordable housing within the schemes. It is therefore essential that the Council maximises other land and funding opportunities to meet its

annual target of 102 affordable housing units per year. The Council will seek to prioritise social rented homes where possible.

The Council is looking at strengthening relationships with housing association partners to achieve 100% affordable housing schemes, as well as taking advantage of its recent success in securing Investment Partner status with Homes England. As a result of this, the Council has successfully secured grant funding to help deliver a new extra care housing scheme, Hale End Court, and intends to bid for funding for other pipeline schemes. The Council will also explore new funding models, such as “income-strip” finance.

Over the next 5 years, the Council will:

- Deliver at least 510 new affordable homes, including through working in strengthened partnership with Thamesway, Registered Providers and developers, as well as identifying new-build opportunities on council-owned land.
- Ensure all new homes, including all affordable homes, are built to a high quality standard in accordance with the policies of the Core Strategy, as well as the Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and national space standards.
- Explore alternative funding sources for new affordable homes, including accessing more Homes England funding through the Council’s Investment Partner status.
- Deliver the multi-million pound regeneration of Sheerwater, providing high quality homes and a thriving and sustainable community.
- Update the Council’s Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document to account for national policy changes and to improve (where possible) its processes for securing affordable housing.
- Undertake a strategic review of the Council’s temporary accommodation portfolio to identify any future development opportunities.
- Look for opportunities arising from the asset management strategy and property review to develop more affordable housing.
- Review the Council’s incentives scheme to further encourage tenants who are under-occupying Council homes to move to smaller homes.
- Meet the need for 22 new Gypsy and Traveller pitches already identified in the Gypsy and Traveller Assessment up to 2027.

1.2 Strategic Priority 2 - To prevent homelessness and help those in housing need

Homelessness and poor housing can have a profound effect on people’s lives. It has a detrimental effect on health and wellbeing and reduces life opportunities.

The Council has a legal duty to provide services to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, with a strong focus on prevention and tackling root causes. Successful homelessness prevention has been the main aim of Woking’s Housing Options approach for many years and it will need to remain so with the added duties under the [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#). The team use a range of other tools to prevent and address

homelessness, including family mediation, home visits, negotiation with landlords, landlord incentives, prevention funding to help with rent arrears and floating support.

Approximately 400 homeless applications are assessed each year. As the number of Council-owned properties has reduced through the Right to Buy, and waiting times for social housing have increased, the Housing Options team has increasingly focused on providing homeless households with suitable homes in the private rented sector. There are a number of challenges facing the Council and its partners, so it is crucial that all stakeholders continue to work together to tackle homelessness by exploring new opportunities and finding new ways of working.

In the coming months, it is predicted that the number of people experiencing homelessness and requiring temporary accommodation will increase due to the lasting impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. When the temporary eviction ban is lifted and the furlough scheme ceases, homelessness is expected to spike. The Council's new temporary accommodation will help to meet this demand locally, but it is essential that the Council continues to secure more properties through its "Let's Rent" scheme.

The 'Everyone In' initiative was introduced to keep rough sleepers safe during the pandemic. As part of the 'Everyone In' government initiative, approximately 15,000 people nationally who were sleeping rough, in unsafe communal settings or at imminent risk of rough sleeping were placed into emergency accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic. This included the Council and local charity, York Road Project, accommodating over 160 people in Woking. Funding has been secured to assist the Council source long-term accommodation and ensure a lasting positive legacy from the pandemic.

In recent years, the Council has been increasingly reliant on the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation (B&B), a limited number of shared-facilities temporary accommodation (TA) properties and Council-owned properties within the Sheerwater regeneration area to house those who find themselves homeless. The Council is working towards reducing the number of households placed in B&B, particularly outside the Borough. The aim is to undertake a strategic review of the Council's temporary accommodation portfolio to identify any future development opportunities.

In 2020, the Council adopted a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which included the following four priorities:

- To prevent homelessness and offer early help.
- To provide a range of accommodation options.
- To support vulnerable residents through partnership working.
- To reduce rough sleeping.

Over the next 5 years, the Council will:

- Continue to prevent homelessness using a range of tools available, including the Housing Options Floating Support Service and outreach services.
- Further develop Personal Housing Plans (PHPs) to become more holistic and with regular reviews/updates.
- Reduce the number of households placed in B&B, particularly outside the Borough.

- Develop and implement an Exit Strategy for households living in temporary accommodation within the Sheerwater regeneration area.
- Maintain Housing representation and participation at multi-agency meetings.
- Support vulnerable residents through partnership working with local partners, including York Road Project, Women's Support Centre, Citizens Advice Woking, Your Sanctuary, local foodbanks, Surrey County Council, Woking MIND and JobCentre +.
- Arrange and co-ordinate an annual Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy meeting.
- Provide suitable move-on accommodation for rough sleepers who have been accommodated during the Covid-19 pandemic and prevent their return to the streets.
- Provide new premises for the York Road Project.
- Work with identified landlords in the private rented sector to provide accommodation for rough sleepers.

1.3 Strategic Priority 3 - To help people to achieve independence and wellbeing

Access to good quality housing and support services is key to the Council's preventative strategies to enable vulnerable people to live successfully and independently in the community. Woking Borough Council's focus is on supporting customers not just to resolve their housing issues, but also encouraging them to improve their health and wellbeing. Partnership working with other statutory and voluntary agencies is key to achieving this objective. A new Health and Wellbeing Strategy is currently being developed alongside this Housing Strategy to ensure that the priorities and resulting action plans are aligned.

Brockhill extra care is a unique housing scheme, located in Goldsworth Park, designed to meet the needs of frail or vulnerable people living in Woking. Brockhill provides 49 homes and is currently the only extra care housing scheme in the Borough, resulting in a continual waiting list. Due to the high demand for extra care housing, the Council has commissioned a new scheme in Old Woking, Hale End Court. This new scheme is due to be completed in autumn 2021 and will provide an additional 48 apartments, of which 12 will be for tenants needing care. Unlike other schemes, both Brockhill and Hale End Court provide 24/7 personal care to help those with additional support needs to remain as independent as possible. These schemes enable residents to also benefit from services such as on-site meals, a hair salon, day activities and chiropody.

In addition to these extra care schemes, the Council owns nine sheltered housing schemes. This accommodation is typically for applicants aged 60+ but could also be for applicants with a physical disability or mobility issues who would benefit from the facilities of a sheltered scheme, such as regular support visits. A new sheltered accommodation scheme is planned as part of the Sheerwater regeneration.

As well as the designated housing schemes, the Council offers a range of support services designed to promote ongoing independence and wellbeing. The Council's Independent

Support service works in partnership with other external agencies to offer support to anyone who needs it, regardless of tenure. This team works closely with the Council's housing team to ensure that tenants are able to maintain their tenancy agreements, and to provide a direct link to other vital Council services.

Woking Borough Council offers advice, support and assistance for disabled adaptations in a resident's home to allow them to continue to live independently. Residents and their families who are looking at potential aids and adaptations are able to visit the Woking Independence Show Home (WISH) to view and try out different equipment, including smart technology. At the WISH, there is a fully integrated Careline equipment display which features door alarms, bed sensors and pill dispensers. The Council's Careline team work closely with health and social care to ensure the most appropriate alarms and sensors are used to promote independence at home. Furthermore, the Woking Safer Living and Independence Consultancy Clinic (SLICC) enables residents to discuss minor and major home adaptations and get advice on how to adapt daily routines to increase independence at home.

An essential part of living well at home is having access to nutritious meals. The Council's community meals service offers this and the delivery person can also signpost to other services and look out for deterioration in a resident's health or the condition of their property. Homesafe Plus tailors all of the existing borough services, including community meals, to provide immediate support after hospital discharge. It aims to reduce pressures on local NHS services by facilitating a timely discharge, reducing preventable hospital admissions and helping patient's access support provided by local authorities.

The Council is also looking at the possibility of implementing a local Homeshare scheme. This scheme would enable an older householder with a spare room to be matched with a younger person who will provide an agreed amount of support in exchange for sociable and affordable accommodation. This helps older people stay independently at home for longer; provides affordable accommodation at a time of record housing shortages and high rent; and builds stronger and more resilient communities.

Over the next 5 years, the Council will:

- Help people to live safe and independent lives by offering a range of specialist accommodation options, which includes extra care housing and sheltered housing.
- Continue to work in partnership with a range of health and social care colleagues.
- Continue to offer a range of support services that help vulnerable residents to remain living independently and safely in the community, regardless of tenure.
- Complete the development of Hale End Court Extra Care Housing Scheme in Old Woking and the new sheltered housing scheme in Sheerwater.
- Work with Surrey County Council to identify and address the future housing needs of older people, people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable persons.
- Positively encourage older transfer applicants, who wish to downsize from family-sized accommodation into one of the sheltered schemes.

- Continue to investigate the establishment of a local Homeshare scheme to match someone needing an affordable home with someone who has a spare room (in return for help around the house and companionship).

1.4 Strategic Priority 4 - To deliver an improved housing service to our tenants and leaseholders

Woking Borough Council owns over 3,300 social rented homes, plus a further 458 leasehold properties. The Council is committed to ensuring its tenants and leaseholders enjoy good quality housing and are more actively involved in shaping these services going forward.

As the 10-year contract with New Vision Homes (NVH) draws to an end in March 2022, the Council has approved a hybrid model for the future, with Housing Management and Asset Management Services being brought back in-house and the repairs and maintenance contracts re-tendered. This will mark a major shift in the way the Council's housing services are delivered and was strongly supported by tenants and leaseholders when consulted. The objectives are to improve the customer journey across the Housing Service, ensure there is clearer accountability in decision making and deliver a value for money service.

The Tenant and Leaseholder Survey in August 2020 highlighted a number of areas that need improving including repairs and maintenance, dealing with anti-social behaviour and maintaining the appearance of the Council's housing estates. The Council is committed to addressing these issues and to involving residents in the future delivery of these services through a new Resident Engagement Strategy. The first step in this process has been to launch a regular newsletter - Woking@Home - that has been sent out to all tenants and leaseholders. Going forward, the Council wants to create more opportunities for residents to get involved, including through tenant panels/boards, estate inspections and the rollout of its new online engagement platform.

As part of this aim to increase resident involvement, the Council will be working to increase the quality and volume of correspondence with leaseholders, allowing leaseholders to have a greater say about where they live as well as supporting leaseholders with their current lease and their future plans.

Last year, the Council launched its new Housing IT system and further phases of this are planned over the next year. It is envisaged that the system will bring together all aspects of the housing service into one system. A key priority for the new system is the increased capacity for customer's to self-serve through a new online housing register application process and a tenant's portal.

Over 97% of the Council's housing stock meets the Decent Homes Standards. The Council plans to develop a long-term Asset Management Strategy to prioritise works based on stock condition information, as well as looking at improving the appearance of our estates and meeting future carbon reduction targets. The tragic events at Grenfell Tower highlighted the importance of compliance, regulatory standards for health and safety and fire safety. These will continue to be key priorities for the Council when agreeing its future asset management plans.

With social housing being so scarce, it is vital that the Council makes the best use of its housing stock. Whilst the majority of applicants on the Housing Register need smaller properties, the waiting times for larger family homes are longer, as these properties

turnover less frequently. As at February 2021, 411 (12.2%) of the Council's housing stock was under-occupied, but only 37 of these households were registered for downsizing. The Council intends to work with tenants who are currently under-occupying and support them to downsize by offering them attractive opportunities and incentives, which will in turn free up homes that are in high demand.

Over the next 5 years, the Council will:

- Bring housing and asset management services back in-house and re-tender the repairs and maintenance contracts, with a strong emphasis on customer service and first-time fix.
- Explore future opportunities to further increase the use of local labour and local businesses in the delivery of the service.
- Produce a guide for leaseholders, detailing the rights that a leaseholder has, information on how to access advice, the Council's processes and procedures that can affect leaseholders and the responsibilities of both the leaseholder and landlord.
- Ensure that leaseholders are updated annually about future plans for major works to their block, including a cost estimate.
- Maintain properties at a minimum of the Decent Homes Standard.
- Strive to improve and maintain the appearance of the Council's housing estates.
- Rebuild the Council's relationship with its tenants and leaseholders and increasingly involve them in shaping its service offer.
- Carry out a detailed consultation with leaseholders on major works to blocks, allowing leaseholders to be directly involved with where they live.
- Constantly seek to improve all housing services through the greater use of benchmarking data and resident feedback.
- Ensure that the Council's approach to tackling anti-social behaviour is effective, robust and fair.
- Improve the customer journey, including offering greater self-serve options through the new integrated IT system.
- Increase the focus on tenancy sustainment to maximise income collection and support positive outcomes for tenants.
- Improve energy efficiency amongst Council-owned stock through routine maintenance programmes and new development schemes.

1.5 Strategic Priority 5 - To enhance choice, standards and quality within the private rented sector

Woking Borough Council is committed to improving the standards and increasing access to homes in the private rented sector to meet local needs. Legislative changes, as set out in the [Housing and Planning Act 2016](#), have expanded the Council's responsibilities (i.e. with regard to rogue landlords and licensing for houses of multiple occupation, and ensuring that private rented properties meet the revised standards around energy performance and room sizes).

The Council's Housing Standards Team work with private landlords to ensure that private rented housing stock is safe, good quality and maintained to a high standard within legislative framework. The Council is committed to prioritising compliance and fire safety, including working with property owners to ensure any cladding issues are remediated in a timely manner.

Woking Borough Council's [climate emergency action plan](#) focuses on reducing, and eventually eliminating, its carbon footprint. The Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme was launched in August 2020 and an additional £300m has been allocated to the scheme. The Council already has an allocation from this scheme and has bid in the second funding round to enable retrofits to be carried out within low-income households.

The Council is committed to improving the standard of private rented properties and the health and wellbeing of tenants. Since 2018, Canalside Ward (parts of Maybury and Woking Town Centre) has been part of a pilot selective licensing scheme. The Canalside ward was identified due to 44% of homes in the ward being private rented properties, compared to the national average of 19.6%, and the higher frequency of prosecution cases taken against private landlords in this area. Consequently, private landlords or their managing agents in this ward are required to have a license for each private rented property. As at March 2021, there were 865 homes licensed in Canalside under the selective licensing scheme. The pilot was for five years and the priority now is to review the impact of the scheme on raising standards, in order to establish the future of selective licensing in the borough.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) are a vital source of housing in the private rented sector. They traditionally provide housing at the more affordable and transient end of the housing market. The Council's focus on HMO's is to ensure that there is a level playing field for landlords and that properties are safe, well managed and of a good standard. There are currently 80 HMO's licensed in Woking Borough. Various forms of advice and assistance are available to landlords to improve their properties and, where necessary, enforcement action will be taken. The next step is to focus on identifying HMOs that are not licensed to ensure these become compliant.

Empty homes are recognised as a wasted resource, particularly in areas such as Woking where there is such a high demand for all types of housing. Houses that are left unoccupied can quickly fall into disrepair and impact local neighbourhoods. Bringing empty properties back into use can benefit individual owners, potential occupiers, businesses and the wider community. As at April 2021, Woking had 433 long term empty properties, with 105 of these lying empty for more than 24 months. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significantly

detrimental impact on the team's ability to work towards addressing this. Woking Borough Council intends to renew its efforts in this area and bring a minimum of 40 empty properties back into use through negotiation, using enforcement action as a last resort.

The Council's [Let's Rent](#) service procures private rented properties for households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness and supports tenancy sustainment. The service has been expanded this year to assist Rough Sleepers or those at risk of Rough Sleeping. Let's Rent enables the Council to accommodate homeless households more quickly into long-term accommodation than through the Housing Register and in turn discharge its homeless duties. The service provides landlord incentives and advice and support to tenants and landlords. As at March 2021, there were 80 households on the waiting list. The Council will continue to promote this service with the ambition to secure more accommodation, including through further joint working with Thamesway Housing.

Over the next 5 years, the Council will:

- Seek to improve conditions in the private rented sector through negotiation and enforcement (where required).
- Improve knowledge of the location and condition of HMOs through street surveys and other records.
- Review publications, advice and assistance for landlords of HMOs, and develop a publicity plan to maximise compliance with mandatory licensing requirements.
- Conduct an impact assessment of the Canalside Selective Licensing Scheme and use this evidence to inform the decision on the future direction when the current scheme ends in March 2023.
- Continue to prioritise fire safety, including working with property owners to ensure any cladding issues are remediated in a timely manner.
- Continue to develop and promote the Council's "Let's Rent" schemes to secure more accommodation for homeless households, including through further joint working with Thamesway Housing.
- Bring a minimum of 40 empty properties back into use through negotiation, using enforcement action as a last resort.
- Work with Action Surrey to access and promote the £6.2 million Green Homes Grant.
- Maintain and improve working relationships with Lettings Agents and Landlords, including holding a yearly Private Sector Landlord Forum to disseminate best practice.
- Review the IT systems for Private Sector housing to deliver a more efficient and customer-friendly service.

- Organise training with Tenants and Landlords, ensuring they are aware of and fully compliant with the latest legislation to ensure high standards in the private rented sector in Woking.

2. How will the Council monitor progress?

Progress against the Housing Strategy will be monitored by the respective teams within Housing Services and Planning, with additional monitoring provided through the Housing Task Group. This group comprises of seven Members of the Council representing all Groups on the Council based on proportionality. The Elected Members are appointed annually by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in May, with the Chair and Vice-Chair being appointed annually at the first meeting of the Housing Task Group.

The Task Group feeds into the development of a range of housing strategies and policies, while also monitoring the performance and delivery of key housing projects. The members of the Task Group report on a regular basis to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and any proposals from the Task Group are reported to the Council's Executive, normally following consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

An Action Plan will be developed with partners to sit alongside this Strategy following the consultation. The Action Plan is intended to be a live document, which will be subject to continuous review and updating to ensure it remains effective and current. Updates will be published on the Council's website.

ANNEXE 1 – Housing Strategy Action Plan

Strategy Priority 1 - To provide well designed, high quality homes that are affordable and meet local needs

| No. | Commitment | Actions/Milestones | Lead Officer | Risks | Status |
|-----|--|---|---|---|--------|
| 1.1 | Deliver at least 510 new affordable homes, including through working in strengthened partnership with Thamesway, Registered Providers and developers, as well as identifying new-build opportunities on council-owned land. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete affordable housing developments at Hale End Court and Rydens Way in 2021/22 • Complete affordable housing development at Bonsey Lane in 2022/23 • Seek to maximise affordable homes through the planning process • Work with active Registered Providers to bring forward affordable housing schemes, such as, Portugal Road. | Strategic Housing and Development Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of development finance. • Lack of developable land. • Development viability • Changes to Government policy. | |
| 1.2 | Ensure all new homes, including all affordable homes, are built to a high quality standard in accordance with the policies of the Core Strategy, as well as the Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and national space standards. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Housing and Development Team to comment on all affordable housing proposals • Ensure Council-led schemes meet or exceed our own and national design standards • Seek to incorporate higher sustainability standards in our own developments. | Strategic Housing and Development Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to Government policy | |
| 1.3 | Explore alternative funding sources for new affordable homes, including accessing more Homes England funding through the | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore income-strip finance as a means of delivering additional affordable homes • Bid for Homes England | Strategic Housing and Development Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Untested models • Lack of Government funding | |

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|---------|---|--|--|---|--|
| | Council's Investment Partner status. | funding for Rydens Way and Bonsey Lane sites | | | |
| 1.4 | Deliver the multi-million pound regeneration of Sheerwater, providing high quality homes and a thriving and sustainable community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Purple phase in 2021/22. • Commence Red, Yellow and Copper phases in 2021/22. | Sheerwater Regeneration Project Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Land assembly/CPO • Supply chains | |
| 1.5 | Update the Council's Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document to account for national policy changes and to improve (where possible) its processes for securing affordable housing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Planning Policy team to review SPD in 2021/22. | Strategic Housing and Development Manager Planning Policy Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to Government policy | |
| Page 32 | Undertake a strategic review of the Council's temporary accommodation portfolio to identify any future development opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the review by Summer 2024. | Strategic Housing and Development Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources • Demand for temporary accommodation too high to consider alternative site use | |
| 1.7 | Look for opportunities arising from the asset management strategy and property review to develop more affordable housing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an Asset Management Strategy for our Council-owned stock by December 2022. • Identify potential development sites resulting from this by Summer 2023. | Strategic Housing and Development Manager Housing Asset Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources • Lack of suitable sites | |
| 1.8 | Review the Council's incentives scheme to further encourage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an officer working group to review the Council's | Strategic Housing and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of family homes available | |

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| | tenants who are under-occupying Council homes to move to smaller homes. | <p>incentives package by December 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with tenants by March 2022 to better understand what would compel them to downsize. | Development Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources | |
| 1.9 | Meet the need for 22 new Gypsy and Traveller pitches already identified in the Gypsy and Traveller Assessment up to 2027. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocation of land for 23 Gypsy and Traveller pitches through the Site Allocations DPD, expected to be adopted in 2021 (taking into account delivery to date, the remaining need up to 2027 is 18 pitches). | <p>Strategic Housing and Development Manager</p> <p>Planning Policy Manager</p> | Possibility that site allocations may not be delivered as expected (the SADPD sets out potential actions to take if that occurs) | |

Strategic Priority 2 - To prevent homelessness and help those in housing need

| No. | Commitment | Actions/Milestones | Lead Officer | Risks | Status |
|-----|---|--|------------------------------|--|--------|
| 2.1 | Continue to prevent homelessness using a range of tools available, including our Housing Options Floating Support Service and outreach services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to bid for funding when available to strengthen our floating support offer | Housing Solutions Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of resources if numbers increase following removal of safety net during pandemic. | |
| 2.2 | Further develop Personal Housing Plans (PHPs) to become more holistic and with regular reviews/updates. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure PHPs are in place and reviewed with the clients at least every 3 months. | Housing Options Team Leaders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of resources if numbers increase following removal of safety net during pandemic. | |
| 2.3 | Reduce the number of households placed in B&B outside the Borough | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open our new temporary accommodation scheme in summer 2021 to reduce reliance on B&B. | Housing Solutions Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More people requiring B&B accommodation as a result of Covid-19 and removal of safety measures such as ban on possession proceedings | |
| 2.4 | Develop and implement an Exit Strategy for households living in temporary accommodation within the Sheerwater regeneration area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise the rehousing of remaining 40 households living in Sheerwater temporary accommodation based on the development phasing. Open new temporary accommodation scheme by | Housing Solutions Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough accommodation available. Benefit cap | |

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|-----|--|--|---|---|--|
| | | <p>Summer 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure more Let's Rent Homes. | | | |
| 2.5 | Maintain Housing representation and participation at multi-agency meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All relevant multi-agency meetings to be attended by teams as far as possible. | <p>Housing Solutions Manager</p> <p>Housing Options Team Leaders</p> <p>Housing Allocations Team Leader</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workload too heavy to attend. | |
| 2.6 | Support vulnerable residents through partnership working with local partners, include York Road Project, Women's Support Centre, Citizens Advice, Your Sanctuary, local foodbanks, Surrey County Council, Woking MIND and JobCentre+ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to offer Outreach Advice Service at key local venues (e.g B&B, Refuge, YRP). Continue to joint fund CAW Court Desk. Continue to work closely with NVH to increase the focus on tenancy sustainment. Ongoing work with WBC support teams e.g Family Support, Independent Living, Sheerwater Resident Engagement Team. Mental Health & Housing Support Worker recruited jointly and employed by MIND. | Housing Solutions Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of funding Not enough resources | |
| 2.7 | Arrange and co-ordinate an annual Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rough Sleeping Coordinator to arrange at least one partnership meeting a year. | Housing Solutions Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other agencies no longer participate. | |

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| 2.8 | Provide suitable move-on | • Continue to secure more | Housing | • Lack of | |
| Strategic Priority 3 - Helping older people and people with disabilities to achieve independence and wellbeing | | | | | |
| No. | Commitment | Actions/Milestones | Accommodation Lead Officer | Risks | Status |
| 3.1 | Help people return to the streets. | • Offer two extra | Government funding Solutions | • Ongoing | |
| | | acquire additional flats for former rough sleepers. | | • Private rentals too expensive. • Lack of affordable homes. | |
| 2.9 | Provide new premises for the York Road Project | • Work with York Road Project to secure a site to deliver a new modern night shelter facility. | Housing Solutions Manager | • Funding • Lack of suitable sites | |
| 2.10 | Work with identified landlords in the private rented sector to provide accommodation for rough sleepers. | • New Private Sector Lettings Navigator to continue to recruit to new landlords willing to accommodate those with a history of rough sleeping. • Review our landlord incentives | Private Sector Housing Manager | • Landlords not willing to let to rough sleepers • Not enough accommodation available • Accommodation unaffordable. • Incentives not enough to encourage landlords. • People return to the streets. | |

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| | independent lives by offering a range of specialist accommodation options, which includes extra care housing and sheltered housing. | <p>schemes by Autumn 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to offer nine sheltered accommodation schemes Continue to operate specialist panels to ensure appropriate specialist accommodation matched to client needs | <p>Manager</p> <p>Housing Allocations Team Leader</p> | <p>from SCC providing onsite care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring good representation from partner organisations on panels | |
| 3.2 | Continue to work in partnership with a range of health and social care colleagues. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue to be an active member of NW Surrey Alliance partnership Continue to work with Woking MIND to offer Housing and Mental Health Support Worker Continue to work with YRP to identify older rough sleepers Ensure older rough sleepers engage with health and wellbeing professionals Floating Support Team to continue to work/liaise with ASC colleagues To restart multi-agency Hoarding Task Group | <p>Health and Wellbeing Manager</p> <p>Housing Solutions Manager</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff priorities and demands. Resources unable to keep up with changes in Health and Social Care ICP/SCC and government funding/grants reduced or withdrawn | |
| 3.3 | Continue to offer a range of support services that help vulnerable residents to remain living independently and safely in the community, regardless of tenure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Housing Assistance Policy by Autumn 2021 Support the Frailty Pathway including Active Surrey targeted falls prevention programme pilot by exploring how social | <p>Homelink Manager</p> <p>Health and Wellbeing Manager</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff priorities and demands Resources unable to keep up with changes in Health and Social Care ICP/SCC and government | |

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| | | <p>prescribers can refer into the programme by Summer 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the extension of the falls responder service beyond Careline clients with NWS Alliance by April 2022 • Explore with other partners (e.g. SECamb and reablement) how their services can benefit from Homesafe Plus services with callers diverted to Falls Responder Service where appropriate • Update Living Well leaflets to include all services available to Woking residents which can support independent living by April 2022 • Work with partners to increase utilisation of the Woking Independent Show Home by April 2022 | | <p>funding/grants reduced or withdrawn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WBC financial pressures | |
| 3.4 | Complete the development of Hale End Court Extra Care Housing Scheme in Old Woking and the new sheltered housing scheme in Sheerwater. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Hale End Court Extra Care in September 2021 • First tenants due to move in during October 2021 • Complete new sheltered housing scheme in Sheerwater during 2023/2024 | Strategic Housing and Development Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction delays • Construction costs pressures | |
| 3.5 | Work with Surrey County Council to identify and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work in partnership with Surrey | Director of Housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of developable land • Funding | |

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| | address the future housing needs of older people, people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable persons. | <p>Housing Needs Managers and Surrey Chief Housing Officers groups to keep abreast of needs studies being conducted by SCC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate and support SCC with any Woking specific proposals. | | | |
| 3.6 | Positively encourage older transfer applicants, who wish to downsize from family-sized accommodation into one of the sheltered or Extra-Care schemes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an officer working group to review the Council's incentives package by December 2021 Engage with tenants by March 2022 to better understand what would compel them to downsize. | Housing Solutions Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued shortage of family sized accommodation Inefficient use of existing stock | |
| Page 39 | Continue to investigate the establishment of a local Homeshare scheme to match someone needing an affordable home with someone who has a spare room (in return for help around the house and companionship). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building upon previously completed feasibility study, develop a business case for a local Homeshare scheme by December 2022 | Strategic Housing and Development Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of suitable partner organisation Unclear demand Initial set up costs Concerns over sharing in context of Covid-19 pandemic | |

Strategic Priority 4 - Making better use of all existing housing by improving the standard and quality of management

| No. | Commitment | Actions/Milestones | Lead Officer | Risks | Status |
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| 4.1 | Bring housing and asset management services back in-house and re-tender the repairs and maintenance contracts, with a strong emphasis on customer service and first-time fix | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing to be brought in house on 1st April 2022 Issue Tender Documents for responsive repairs and voids in August 2021. | <p>Director of Housing</p> <p>Housing Asset Manager</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of key staff Procurement is delayed, leading to no service provision on 01/04/2022 Procurement delays Costs tendered are not sustainable | |
| | Explore future opportunities to further increase the use of local labour and local businesses in the delivery of the service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All contracts are being reprocured, allowing for all local companies to submit interest Social value elements to scoring criteria | Housing Asset Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stringent checks required to avoid a conflict of interest Smaller contractors may not be able to meet the demand volumes | |
| 4.3 | Produce a guide for leaseholders, detailing the rights that a leaseholder has, information on how to access advice, the Council's processes and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaseholders guide to be produced, incorporating guidance on the Section 20 process, by March 2023. | <p>Housing Management (from 2022)</p> <p>Housing Asset Manager</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing leaseholders may fully understand their obligations | |

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| | procedures that can affect leaseholders and the responsibilities of both the leaseholder and landlord. | | | | |
| 4.4 | Ensure that leaseholders are updated annually about future plans for major works to their block, including a cost estimate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All stock condition data to be fully up-to-date by November 2021 • Stock condition data to be priced to provide cost estimates in January 2022. | Housing Asset Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuracy of cost estimates • Timescales for works subject to change. • Estimates will not include any items arising from Leaseholder consultation | |
| 4.5 Page 41 | Maintain properties at a minimum of the Decent Homes Standard. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete all 2021-22 Decent Homes programmes works by December 2021 • Programmes for 2022 and beyond to be developed | Housing Asset Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial budgets may be required in the short to medium term • HRA budget constraints | |
| 4.6 | Strive to improve and maintain the appearance of the Council's housing estates. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership working with Serco and others to continue • Input to Council-wide procurement of grounds maintenance contract for April 2023 onwards | Housing Asset Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRA budget onstraints | |
| 4.7 | Rebuild the Council's relationship with its tenants and leaseholders and increasingly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a tenant and leaseholder area through Engagement HQ by March 2022. • Rollout at least 3 newsletters to tenants and leaseholders | Resident Engagement Team Leader | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of volunteers | |

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| | involve them in shaping its service offer. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> each year. Grow the number of involved tenants sitting on our panels | | | |
| 4.8 | Carry out a detailed consultation with leaseholders on major works to blocks, allowing leaseholders to be directly involved with where they live. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When a major refurbishment project for a block is ready to commence, a draft specification and set of options will be produced for informal consultation with leaseholders ahead of issuing the statutory Section 20 consultation. This will take effect after April 2022. | Housing Asset Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requests from Leaseholders may contradict corporate objectives Extended consultation could delay projects | |
| Page 42 | Constantly seek to improve all housing services through the greater use of benchmarking data and resident feedback. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new Repairs service will benchmarked against Housemark KPI's (amended to reflect the Woking service). This will allow for a comparison of performance against over 300 other providers. A resident feedback facility will be developed through Engagement HQ. From 2022, review approach to the annual survey. | All Senior Managers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KPI benchmarking does not always allow 'like for like' comparison. Unrealistic expectations | |
| 4.10 | Ensure that the Council's approach to tackling anti-social behaviour is | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review ASB policy by March 2023. | Housing Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff resources | |

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| | effective, robust and fair. | | | | |
| 4.11 | Improve the customer journey, including offering greater self-serve options through the new integrated IT system and access to digital solutions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A resident feedback facility will be developed through Engagement HQ • Tender Documents for Asset Management workstreams include the provision of integrating contractor IT systems with WBC systems, allowing a more direct communication method • Tender Documents for Asset Management workstreams include improved service standards, based on resident feedback • Continue to improve new Tenants Portal on OpenHousing system. | All Senior Managers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all tenants and leaseholders can use IT solutions and self-serve | |
| 4.12 | Increase the focus on tenancy sustainment to maximise income collection and support positive outcomes for tenants. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Council's approach to income collection and tenancy sustainment by July 2023. | Housing Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff resources | |
| 4.13 | Improve energy efficiency amongst Council-owned stock through | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Void specification has been amended to include provision of low energy lighting and new loft | Housing Asset Manager Strategic Housing and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works to improve properties to Band C or above are not financially viable without government funding | |

Strategic Priority 5 - Enhancing choice, standards and quality within the private rented sector

| No. | Commitment | Programmes and new development schemes | Actions/Milestones | Lead Officer | Risks | Status |
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| 5.1 | Seek to improve conditions in the private rented sector through negotiation and enforcement (where required). | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All licensed HMOs to be inspected within the lifetime of the licence. • EPC surveying of the entire stock ongoing and due for completion in summer 2021 • Selective Licensed properties • Ensure service requests are responded to and property conditions improved where required. • Support Officers to be trained to undertake basic property inspections, increasing team capacity. | Private Sector Housing Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity of the Housing Standards Team and Legal Team. • Tenants and landlords awareness of Housing Standards assistance. | |
| 5.2 | Improve knowledge of the location and condition of HMOs through street surveys and other records. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the HMO online reporting tool. • Discussions to take place with the Elections, Council Tax and Housing Benefit Departments to identify possible HMOs. • Encourage other Departments to | Private Sector Housing Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of general public, landlords and tenants awareness of the 'Report it' tool. • Access to other Department records to be agreed. | |

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| | | inform Housing Standards of possible HMOs when they come across them. | | | |
| 5.3 | Review publications, advice and assistance for landlords of HMOs, and develop a publicity plan to maximise compliance with mandatory licensing requirements. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicity plan is ongoing and a regular newsletter is sent to landlords and Letting Agents. • Complete full review of WBC Website information and leaflets. • Consider further joint working with NRLA. • Hold at least one landlord forum per annum (once restrictions allow but may be held online). • Continue joint working with Private Sector Housing Let's Rent service. | Private Sector Housing Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity of other teams to assist with promotion. • Identifying landlords not already known to WBC is difficult. | |
| 5.4 | Conduct an impact assessment of the Canalside Selective Licensing Scheme and use this evidence to inform the decision on the future direction when the current scheme ends in March 2023. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect at least 50% of Selective Licensed properties by March 2022. • Confirm licence conditions are met and improve property conditions by negotiation or enforcement as required. • Analysis of property conditions and numbers improved by April 2022. • Produce impact assessment and proposals by July 2022 and take to CLT, HTG and Committees. • If the scheme is to be renewed then a public consultation of 10 weeks is required from September 2022. | Private Sector Housing Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property inspections not completed on time and lack of data to review the scheme due to delays caused by the pandemic restrictions. • Until properties are inspected the level of work required to improve is not clear and may exceed capacity within the team. • Very short timescales to review and consult due to delays caused by pandemic restrictions. | |
| 5.5 | Continue to prioritise fire safety, including working with property owners to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Await outcome of bids by high rise building freeholders for Government Building Safety Fund for remediation | Private Sector Housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding uncertainties and delays | |

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| | ensure any cladding issues are remediated in a timely manner. | <p>of non ACM buildings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue close working with Surrey Fire & Rescue Service and training within the team. • Continue HMO and Selective Licensing inspections to identify any non-compliant properties, which will be addressed. | Manager | | |
| 5.6 | Continue to develop and promote the Council's "Let's Rent" schemes to secure more accommodation for homeless households, including through further joint working with Thamesway Housing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicity plan is ongoing and adverts have appeared in the Woking Magazine and Woking News & Mail. • Review WBC Website information and leaflets. • Hold monthly meetings with Thamesway Housing to discuss current tenancies and opportunities for Let's Rent. • Review Letting Agent incentives. • Offer enhanced Rough Sleepers landlord incentives following award of MHCLG funding. | Private Sector Housing Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity of other teams to assist with promotion. • Availability of properties at or close to LHA levels. • Prospective tenants often have debt and cannot pass affordability checks. • Prospective tenants with more complex support needs require more intensive support to maintain a tenancy and more support to the landlord to accept them. | |
| 5.7 | Bring a minimum of 40 empty properties back into use through negotiation, using enforcement action as a last resort. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty Homes Questionnaires to be sent out every other month and followed up. • Review Empty Homes Plan by March 2022. • Top 10 long term premium empty properties to be prioritised for intensive casework by March 2022. • Team to undertake appropriate training. • Empty Homes Working Group with | Private Sector Housing Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term intensive casework required with slow results. • Ensuring other priorities do not overtake Empty Homes work. • Enforcement action and working group relies on the capacity of other Departments with different priorities. | |

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| | | other WBC teams to be established and to meet quarterly to tackle top 10 long term premium empty properties by March 2022. | | | |
| 5.8 | Work with Action Surrey to access and promote the £6.2 million Green Homes Grant. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Green Homes Grant has ended and has been replaced by the 'Sustainable Warmth Competition and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund'. To be delivered via Local Authorities and preferred contractors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Authority Delivery (LAD) 2 to be delivered by December 2021 to assist social and private landlords raise energy efficiency in their homes. LAD3 and Home Upgrade Grant phase 1 (HUG1) applications due 18th June 2021 with delivery up to March 2023. | Private Sector Housing Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short application and delivery timescales. Low uptake from private landlords. Identifying properties with low EPCs and low income households. | |
| 5.9 | Maintain and improve working relationships with Lettings Agents and Landlords, including holding a yearly Private Sector Landlord Forum to disseminate best practice. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider further joint working with NRLA. Hold an annual landlord forum (once restrictions allow but may be held online). Further joint working with Housing Standards. | Private Sector Housing Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulties identifying landlords not already known to WBC to attend. General reticence from Letting Agents to work with households affected by homelessness. | |
| 5.10 | Review the IT systems for Private Sector housing to deliver a more efficient and customer-friendly service. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open Housing Private Sector Housing module to be reviewed by December 2021. SharePoint functionality to be reviewed if Open Housing is not fit | Private Sector Housing Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited functionality for PSH module for Let's Rent due to bespoke nature of the service. | |

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| | | for purpose by March 2022. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently no provision for Empty Homes. | |
| 5.11 | Organise training with Tenants and Landlords, ensuring they are aware of and fully compliant with the latest legislation to ensure high standards in the private rented sector in Woking. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-Tenancy training to be piloted in August 2021. Training for landlords to be explored and rolled out by summer 2022. Regular newsletter to be sent via Housing Standards. | Private Sector Housing Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prospective tenants reluctance to attend training. Landlord reluctance to attend training. Ongoing funding availability | |

ANNEXE 2 - National Planning Policy Framework - Affordable Housing Definition

Affordable housing: housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

a) Affordable housing for rent: meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).

b) Starter homes: is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household's eligibility to purchase a starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.

c) Discounted market sales housing: is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

d) Other affordable routes to home ownership: is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

ANNEXE 3 - Glossary

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| Affordable housing | Affordable housing includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. It can be a new-build property or a private sector property that has been purchased for use as an affordable home. |
| Affordable rent | Affordable rent is no more than 80 per cent of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable). |
| Choice Based Lettings | Choice based lettings schemes allow applicants on the housing register to bid for suitable properties that interest them, rather than the council selecting households from the housing register and matching them to a vacancy. |
| Decent Homes Standard | <p>A Government standard used to measure the condition of housing stock. The Government defines a home as 'decent' if it meets all of the following four criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing • Is in a reasonable state of repair. • It has reasonably modern facilities and services. • It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort |
| Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) | A means-tested grant to help disabled applicants with adaptations and improvements in their home. |
| Discount market sale | Sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households. |
| Dwelling | A self-contained 'substantial' unit of accommodation, such as a building, part of a building, caravan, houseboat or other mobile home. |
| Emergency accommodation | Short-term housing for individuals with an urgent need, for example, bed and breakfast hotels and hostels. |
| Extra care housing | Extra care housing is a form of sheltered housing that provides a higher level of support. |
| General needs housing | General Needs Housing applies to general family housing and dwellings for singles and couples. The accommodation is normally provided in self – contained bungalow, house, flat or maisonette form. |

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| Gypsy and Traveller Assessment | An assessment that aims to provide a robust assessment of current and future need for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation. |
| Help to buy | Help to Buy is the Government umbrella name/brand for a range of assisted home ownership products, including equity loans, an ISA and shared ownership. |
| Houses in Multiple Occupation | A House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) is a dwelling that is occupied by more than one household who share basic amenities such as WC, washing, cooking and food preparation facilities. Categories of HMO include Bedsits, Shared house, Household with lodger, Bed and Breakfast, and Converted house. |
| Housing Association | Housing associations provide homes for people who need support, including older people needing support or care and disabled people who need homes with adaptations. |
| Housing Benefit | Housing Benefit is money that the government gives to people with no income or very low incomes to pay for part or all of their rent. |
| Housing Need | Housing need is defined as the number of households who lack their own housing or live in unsuitable housing and who cannot afford to meet their needs in the market. |
| Housing register | <p>The housing register is a list of households waiting for an allocation of social housing. The applicants on the housing register are placed into one of four priority areas based on the information they submitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Band A – Emergency need to move • Band B – Urgent need to move • Band C – Identified housing need • Band D – Low or reduced housing need |
| Housing revenue account (HRA) | The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) records expenditure and income on running a council's own housing stock and closely related services or facilities, which are provided primarily for the benefit of the council's own tenants |
| Independent Living | The Council's independent living schemes offer self-contained accommodation for residents with identified support needs |
| Intermediate Rent | Homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing. |

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| Local Housing Allowance | Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is a housing-related benefit that helps low-income tenants pay their rent when renting a home from a private landlord. |
| Market Housing | Market housing is defined as private housing for rent or sale where the price is set in the open market. |
| Modern Methods of Construction | 'Modern Methods of Construction' (MMC) is a wide term, embracing a range of offsite manufacturing and onsite techniques that provide alternatives to traditional house building. |
| Overcrowding | A household is overcrowded if it has fewer bedrooms than it needs to avoid undesirable sharing, based on the age, sex and relationship of household members. |
| Right to Buy | Right to Buy allows most council tenants to buy their council home at a discount. |
| Section 106 agreement | A Section 106 is a legal agreement between an applicant seeking planning permission and the local planning authority, which is used to mitigate the impact of your new home on the local community and infrastructure. |
| Shared ownership | Shared ownership homes are provided through a housing association. They work by offering first-time buyers a share of the property ownership. A share of between 25% and 75% can be bought, with rent paid on the remaining share. |
| Sheltered accommodation | Sheltered housing is accommodation specifically designed for older people (or younger disabled people) to allow them to live independently. |
| Social rent | The Government's rent policy for Social Rent is typically between 50 and 60 per cent of market rents |
| Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) | An assessment of future housing requirements in an area. |
| Supported accommodation | Supported housing is any housing scheme where housing, support and sometimes care services are provided to help people to live as independently as possible in the community. |
| Temporary accommodation | Temporary accommodation is given to people who don't have a permanent home. This accommodation could be bed and breakfast accommodation in emergencies. |
| The index of Multiple Deprivation | The index of Multiple Deprivation, commonly known as the IMD is the most widely used of the indices of Deprivation and ranks every small area in England from 1(most deprived) to 32,844 (least deprived are). These small areas are known as Lower-layer Super Output Areas (small areas designed to be of similar |

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| | population size with an average of approximately 1,500 residents or 650 households. |
| The index of Multiple Deprivation - 'Barriers to Housing and Services' domain | This indicator falls into two sub-domains: the Geographical Barriers Sub-domain, which relates to the physical proximity of local services, and the Wider Barriers Sub-domain which includes issues relating to access to housing such as affordability. |
| Universal credit | Universal Credit is a government benefit system, replacing six existing benefits with one overall payment. |

EXECUTIVE – 15 JULY 2021

HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

Executive Summary

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2021-31 highlights the five key priority areas of: mental health, isolation and loneliness, ability to remain independent at home, identification and support for carers and obesity.

The strategy was considered by the Woking Joint Committee at its meeting on 23 June 2021 where it was discussed and recommended subject to comments from the Executive on 15 July 2021 and Council on 29 July 2021.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive the draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2031 for pre-decision scrutiny at its meeting on 12 July 2021.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2031 be approved.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: The priorities identified in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy will positively impact and support the health and wellbeing of the residents of Woking.

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| The item(s) above will need to be dealt with by way of a recommendation to Council. |
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Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Julie Fisher, Chief Executive
Email: julie.fisher@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3333

Contact Person: Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager
Email: julie.meme@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3412

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Debbie Harlow
Email: cllrdebbie.harlow@woking.gov.uk

Shadow Portfolio Holder: Councillor Will Forster
Email: cllrwill.forster@woking.gov.uk
Councillor Deborah Hughes
Email: cllrdeborah.hughes@woking.gov.uk

Date Published: 7 July 2021

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The health of people in Woking is generally better than the English average. However, there are inequalities in areas and groups of residents. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2031 looks at the health of Woking in detail, taking into account previous reports, strategies, available data and having considered these in discussion with residents and partners, it identifies the priorities for the Borough. The work will be highlighted in the Action Plan which includes actions to deliver the strategic objective for the priority and measures the outcomes. An Action Plan will be developed every year to deliver the Council's strategic objectives, taking into account resident and partner feedback.
- 1.2 The draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy is attached as Appendix 1.

2.0 Wider Determinants of Health

- 2.1 Health is impacted by a wide range of factors – the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age as well as access to and quality of health and social care. These wider determinants of health can have a positive or negative impact on health.
- 2.2 The Council can influence these wider determinants of health through its roles in planning, designing and developing places, ensuring residents can access health services in their local communities.
- 2.3 To succeed, the Strategy requires strong partnership working with the North West Surrey Health and Care Alliance.

3.0 Methodology

- 3.1 The Strategy has been developed having considered a number of reports and strategies including the NHS Long Term Plan, Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy, priorities of North West Surrey Health and Care Alliance and the work of Woking Redeeming Our Communities. National, Surrey and local data have been analysed to obtain a true picture of Woking's resident's health outcomes.
- 3.2 The Strategy has been tested and priorities shared with key partners and officers have drawn on the expertise and experience working with people in Woking to develop the Strategy.
- 3.3 The Strategy has been developed through the pandemic and taken into account the actions needed to support our most vulnerable residents. There was limited opportunity to directly engage with residents and this strategy will be dynamic, taking into account resident feedback and its Action Plan will be reviewed each year to reflect that feedback. It is intended to use the newly reformed Woking Resident's Panel as a means to engage and test outcomes of the Strategy going forward, as well as existing clients of our services and potential clients.

4.0 Priorities

- 4.1 Five key priorities have been identified to deliver the Council's vision for the health and wellbeing of the Woking population:
 - (i) **We will support and wherever possible, improve the mental health of people in Woking.** Mental health is a priority for our whole population and we have

identified children and young adults as a particular focus group because of the increasing number of issues being experienced.

- (ii) **We will identify and support people experiencing social isolation and loneliness in Woking.** We have identified older people as the focus group because there is strong evidence that many adults aged 50 and over are socially isolated or lonely in ways that put their health at risk.
- (iii) **We will reduce obesity rates in Woking.** Obesity is a significant issue in Woking. We will tackle it by focusing on the main causes, poor diet and low levels of physical activity. We have identified children as the focus group as children who are overweight are more likely to be overweight adults and have higher rates of morbidity, disability and premature mortality in adulthood.
- (iv) **We will empower residents to live independent lives.** We will provide services that support people to live as independently as possible in their own homes.
- (v) **We will support the wellbeing of carers.** We will support carers in a way that will enable them to continue their important caring role but minimise the impact of these duties on their own health and wellbeing.

5.0 Action Plan

- 5.1 An Action Plan will set out the key actions to deliver the priorities. The Action Plan will be a working document that is regularly updated through the life of the Strategy.
- 5.2 The Action Plan will be developed with the principles of supporting diversity and inclusion, partnership working, resident engagement, building on our strengths and utilising digital approaches where possible.
- 5.3 The Action Plan will ensure that monitoring measures are implemented for both the short and long term aspirations, in order to monitor progress.

6.0 Corporate Strategy

- 6.1 The Health and Wellbeing Strategy underpins the corporate objective of “improving the health and wellbeing of all residents” and it clearly demonstrates how the Council’s services impact the wellbeing of residents in the widest sense. The Strategy and Action Plan addresses issues of social isolation, supports independent living and outlines how the Council will work to drive sustainable development that provides the green spaces and environmental improvements that support both physical and emotional wellbeing.
- 6.2 The Strategy has been created together with partners and demonstrates how the Council will work with partners to integrate services and drive best value and effective use of resources.

7.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 7.1 It is anticipated that the work required as a result of the Strategy will be accommodated within existing resources.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 7.2 It is anticipated that the work required as a result of the Strategy will be accommodated within existing resources.

Legal

- 7.3 There are no specific legal implications or risks identified within the report.

8.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 8.1 The Strategy has been developed in consultation with partners, the voluntary sector and staff. The Action Plan will be developed through resident engagement throughout the life of the Strategy.
- 8.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive the draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2031 for pre-decision scrutiny at its meeting on 12 July 2021. The views of the Committee will be reported to the Executive on 15 July 2021.

REPORT ENDS

Living Well in Woking – a Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2031

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Foreword

I am delighted to introduce Woking Borough Council's inaugural Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This document describes our ambition to improve the health and wellbeing of Woking residents over the next ten years and sets out the key priorities we have identified.

Although the council does not directly provide healthcare services, there are many other factors that influence people's health and wellbeing. These include how active people are, their employment status, the social support they can access and the quality of their housing. The council has a role to play in improving these wider determinants and narrowing the gap between those with the best and worst wellbeing in the borough.

The population of Woking is generally healthy, but we know that outcomes are not universally as good as they could be. In the most deprived areas of Woking, life expectancy is almost six years lower for men and over four years lower for women compared to those in the least deprived areas. We have seen the pandemic and lockdowns have a significant impact on health and we have heard from our residents that many are concerned about their mental health and wellbeing.

The pandemic has also changed the way we deliver services and I am proud of the way teams across the Council have responded flexibly to support residents during this time. Through delivery of this strategy we will build on this work with our local communities.

We cannot realise this aim alone, so it is vital that we work with a wide range of partners to deliver this strategy. These include North West Surrey Integrated Care Partnership and the numerous voluntary, community and faith organisations in Woking. We are committed to working innovatively to deliver sustainable improvements in health and wellbeing and ultimately realise our vision of everyone in Woking living a healthy and independent life.

Councillor Deborah Harlow

Setting the scene

The wider determinants of health

Health is impacted by a wide range of factors - the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, as well as their access to and quality of the health and social care system. These wider determinants can have a positive or negative impact on health.



This influence of wider determinants has been recognised in a number of national reports. The Marmot Review¹ into health inequalities in England, published in February 2010, found that people living in the poorest neighbourhoods in England will on average die seven years earlier and spend more of their lives with disability. The Review found that health inequalities are largely preventable and action is required across all the social determinants of health to create the necessary conditions for people to take control of their own lives. Central to the Review is the recognition that disadvantage starts before birth and accumulates throughout life.

Unfortunately, since then the situation has become worse. Health Equity in England,² a follow up report published in 2020, found that since 2010 life expectancy in England has stalled and differences in years in ill health and life expectancy both within and between regions have tended to increase.

The NHS Long Term Plan³ (LTP), published in January 2019, set out an ambitious plan to make improvements for patients over the next ten years. The LTP responded to the Marmot Review, setting out actions the NHS will take to strengthen its contribution to prevention and tackling health inequalities. The LTP committed to funding prevention programmes to cut smoking, reduce obesity, limit alcohol-related A&E admissions and lower air pollution with a particular focus on areas with health inequalities and unmet need.

The LTP priorities also included new service models, improvements in care quality and outcomes, tackling workforce pressures, and upgrading technology and digitally enabled care with a five-year funding settlement.

¹ <https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/fair-society-healthy-lives-full-report.pdf>

² https://www.health.org.uk/sites/default/files/upload/publications/2020/Health%20Equity%20in%20England_The%20Marmot%20Review%2010%20Years%20On_full%20report.pdf

³ <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/nhs-long-term-plan-version-1.2.pdf>

The LTP recognised the role that local authorities, the voluntary and community sector, and other partners working alongside NHS organisations play in improving the health of the local population. The LTP stated that Integrated Care Systems (ICSs), including representation from all these partners, will be created everywhere by April 2021 to plan and deliver services which meet the needs of local communities. The council is a key partner in the Surrey Heartlands ICS.

The LTP also emphasised the need to work alongside patients and individuals to engage them in decisions about their health and wellbeing and to deliver more person-centred care, integrating services around the individual.

The wider determinants of health have also influenced county-wide strategic approaches. In 2019, the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Board published a ten-year **Health and Wellbeing Strategy**⁴. Based on evidence from the Surrey Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the views of Surrey residents, the strategy set out how different partners across Surrey can work with local communities to tackle the wider determinants of health and improve wellbeing together.

The strategy was focused around three key priorities: helping people in Surrey to lead a healthy life; supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of people in Surrey; and supporting people to fulfil their potential. The strategy emphasised the importance of working together within local communities to transform services across Surrey to achieve these aims. Rather than focusing on just the symptoms of ill health, it adopted a preventative approach to addressing root causes of poor health and wellbeing. These include factors such as poor housing and the environment.

A partnership approach is also evident in **Time for Kids**, a new approach and perspective to guide agencies working with children, young people and their families in Surrey. This work was initiated in 2019 by the voluntary sector in Surrey, via Surrey Youth Focus and has involved a 'think tank' approach including the police, NHS, local authorities, schools and children and young people. Time for Kids has five core principles:

- Focus on human connection with a child, with patience and passion, to achieve the very best for all children and young people;
- Enable professionals and volunteers working with children and young people to have the time and resources to provide stability and earn the child/young person's trust;
- Encourage young people to tell their story, to listen, believe and help the young person to make the changes they need to develop hope for their future;
- Find ways to build on the individual strengths of each child whatever they might be and help them to shine; and
- Believe in the child or young person and what they can achieve.

Partnership working is also at the heart of the **North West Surrey Integrated Care Partnership** (NWS ICP). ICPs have formed across Surrey Heartlands, bringing together health, local government and wider partners to utilise their collective resources and expertise for the ultimate benefit of local people.

Figure 1: Map showing Integrated Care Partnerships in Surrey

⁴ https://www.healthysurrey.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/197530/Surrey-Health-and-Wellbeing-Strategy-FINAL-19.11.20.pdf



In December 2020 the NWS ICP partners, including the council, adopted an Alliance Agreement setting out a shared vision, value set and objectives, as well as a framework for the collective oversight of resources and decision making. The objectives of the Alliance are:

- To help people to prevent ill health and manage their own care;
- To reduce health inequalities, using our collective resources to support those with the highest need and deliver excellent outcomes for all North West Surrey residents;
- To deliver planned, responsive, joined up health and care services;
- To create a culture of excellence and a supportive environment for our staff;
- To deliver innovative solutions supported by technological and digital infrastructure;
- To provide services as close to people's homes as possible;
- To create One Team to facilitate the best holistic care and to attract and retain the best talent;
- To reduce duplication and waste;
- To reconsider the way we invest our resources, focusing on prevention and the wider determinants of health outcomes;
- To work with local communities to build new forms of partnership between the public sector, local citizens, community groups, the voluntary sector and local business; and
- To develop a vibrant, sustainable Alliance between partner organisations.

The NWS Health and Care Alliance Board oversees delivery of the Alliance agenda and objectives. The council's Chief Executive is a member of the Alliance Board. NWS ICP has agreed three key priorities as part of their response to the pandemic:

- Looking after our people through effective decompression and effective long-term support – sustained wellbeing support approach and strategy for our people;
- Restoring critical services – getting ahead on key pressure points e.g. diagnostics, system approach to sharing capacity and tackling key challenges including mental health, children and widening inequalities; and
- Embedding innovation – sustained structure for vaccination, embedding digital models and embracing the health and public sector role in socio-economic development.

Delivery of these recover priorities will support the longer-term priorities agreed in January 2021 by the Alliance Board:

- Place Based Teams around Primary Care Networks⁵;
- Frailty, local hubs and community response;
- Integrated discharge; and
- Service configuration and borough developments.

On an even more local level, the Woking **Redeeming Our Communities** conversation⁶, commissioned by Trinity Methodist Church as part of its Foundry Project, held a well-attended engagement event in March 2020 and identified the following as the top three community issues: provision of activities for youth, isolation/loneliness, and mental health.

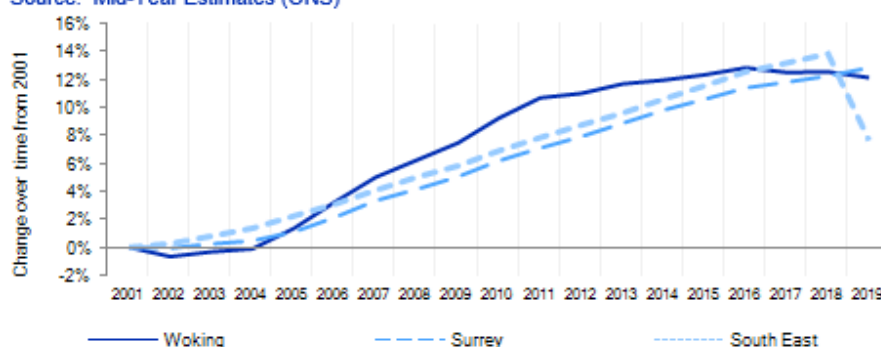
The importance of the wider determinants and their impact on the health of local communities is increasingly recognised beyond the health and care sector by national and regional bodies. For example, **Creating Healthier Built Environments**, Surrey County Council's Guidance for Health and Local Planning published in January 2020, was specifically developed to support and enable health and planning colleagues to share planning policy that addresses public health issues and embed health and wellbeing into planning policies and decisions.

The guidance focuses on two elements of planning and health. One is the creation of healthy environments that support and encourage healthy lifestyles and consider the wider determinants of health. The other is identifying and securing appropriate local health infrastructure to support the health and care system.

A picture of Woking now

Woking is one of 11 districts and boroughs in the county of Surrey⁷. It has a population of 100,793 across ten wards, which has plateaued in recent years following an above average increase from 2006 – 2015. Of the total population, 50.0% are male and 50.0% are female.

Figure: % change in total population from 2001-2019
Source: Mid-Year Estimates (ONS)



Woking has a slightly younger population profile than both England and the South East region. Of the Woking population, 21.6% are aged 0 to 15 (South East: 19.2%, England: 19.2%), 61.1% are aged 16 to 64 (South East: 61.3%, England 62.4%) and 17.3% are aged 65 and over (South East: 19.5%, England: 18.4%).

⁵ Primary Care Networks bring general practices together to work at scale (covering populations of approximately 30,000-50,000 patients), focusing on service delivery.

⁶ <https://roc.uk.com/woking/>

⁷ Throughout this document 'Woking' is used to refer to the borough of Woking (as opposed to the town of Woking).

However, in common with the rest of the country, Woking has an ageing population and the over 65 population is expected to increase by 3,900, more than 20%, in the next ten years.

Woking is the most ethnically diverse borough in Surrey, with a large Pakistani community (5.7% - the highest proportion in Surrey). In 2011, 83.6% of Woking's population identified themselves as white, 11.6% as Asian or Asian British, 1.4% as black or black British, 2.4% as mixed and 1.1% as other ethnic group.

Woking has the biggest Syrian Refugee Resettlement programme in the South East region. 50 Syrian families have been resettled in Woking over the last five years through the Home Office Vulnerable Person's Relocation Scheme. The council provides housing and intensive support for resettlement including health needs, benefits, employment, language training and social integration.

In March 2021 it was announced that Woking was top of the UK Vitality Index 2021⁸ which assesses locations outside London to identify the best places to live, work and do business, in addition to those with the highest growth potential. The index incorporates a range of indicators including economy, business, health outcomes and the environment. Woking has also scored highly in other rankings, earning a spot among the happiest places in the UK, according to the Office for National Statistics, while the most recent Halifax Quality of Life Survey named Woking among the 20 best places to live in Britain.

The health of Woking

The health of people in Woking is generally better than the English average. The life expectancy for both men and women is higher than the average for England – in Woking, life expectancy at birth for males is 82.7 years (compared to 80.8 for the South East region and 79.8 for England) and for females is 84.9 years (compared to 84.3 for the South East region and 83.4 for England).

However, there are health inequalities – differences between the health status of different groups of people – in Woking. In the most deprived areas of Woking, life expectancy is 5.7 years lower for men and 4.6 years lower for women than in the least deprived areas. This is, however, less pronounced than in the South East region generally (7.9 and 6.0 years respectively) and England as a whole (9.5 and 7.5 years respectively).

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought health inequalities into sharp focus. A Public Health England report⁹ published in June 2020 found that the impact of Covid-19 has replicated existing health inequalities, and in some cases has increased them. Nationally, the mortality rates from Covid-19 in the most deprived areas were more than double those in the least deprived areas for both males and females. This is greater than the inequality seen in mortality rates in previous years.

Woking performs well for most other measures of physical health - the infant mortality rate of 3.7 is in line with the South East region (3.7) and lower than England (3.9) and the under 75 mortality rate from cardiovascular diseases (46.8) is better than the averages for the South East region (57.1) and England (70.4), as is the under 75 mortality rate from cancer (110.6 in Woking compared to 121.6 in South East region and 129.2 in England). As the chart below

⁸ <https://www.lsh.co.uk/explore/research-and-views/research/2021/feb/vitality-index-2021>

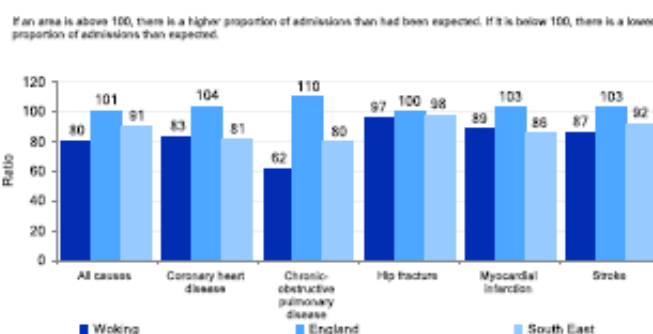
⁹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908434/Disparities_in_the_risk_and_outcomes_of_COVID_August_2020_update.pdf

shows, Woking had a lower emergency admission rate to hospital than other areas in England and the South East from 2013 – 2018.

Figure: Emergency hospital admissions: Standardised ratio (select causes)

Source: Hospital Episode Statistics, Information Centre for Health and Social Care, Office for National Statistics (2013/14 – 2017/18)



However, the estimated prevalence of diabetes in Woking is 5.7%, higher than the Surrey average of 5.4% and broadly in line with the national average of 6.8%. As highlighted in the Government's White Paper **Working Together To Improve Health and Social Care For All** published in February 2021, diabetes is on the rise. The rate of diabetes in England is expected to increase by more than 15% by 2030.

There are over 14 million disabled people in the UK. Into this group fall 19% of working age adults, 44% of pensioners and 8% of children. Woking is the district/borough in Surrey with the highest percentage of adults claiming Disability Living Allowance (1.7% compared to 1.5% Surrey average). The top three wards for disability benefit claims are Hoe Valley, Goldsworth Park and Knaphill. The council's Homelink service has seen an increase in the number of clients with mobility issues as a result of the pandemic.

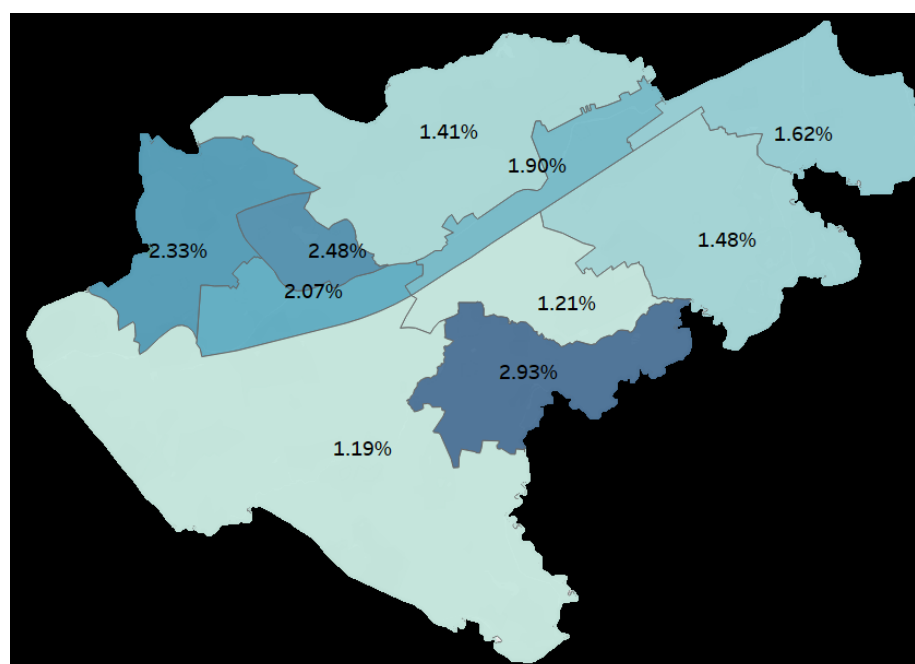


Figure 2: Shows proportion of people who are disabled and receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) Source: Department for Work and Pensions – February 2021

Woking has the second highest rate in Surrey for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Year R (aged 4-5 years) at 79.1 per 1,000 compared to the Surrey average of 55.3. At Year 6 (aged 10-11 years) the rate in Woking of 108.1 is slightly below the Surrey average of 109.6.

Surrey County Council's Graduated Response¹⁰, also known as 'SEND Support', provides an approach for early identification and intervention to support children who experience barriers in making progress. This 'staged' approach follows a four-part cycle - assess, plan, do and review – and sets out how services in Surrey work together with parents/carers, schools and settings to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

In terms of mental health, the rate for self-harm related hospital admissions in Woking is 106.4 (representing 100 admissions per year), lower than the average for both the South East region (199.7) and England (193.4). Similarly, Woking's suicide rate of 8.0 per 100,000 people is lower than that of the South East region (9.6) and England (10.1). Males account for around 75% of suicide deaths, with 45-60 being the highest risk age group. The Surrey Suicide Prevention Strategy 2019-22 aims to reduce levels of suicide by 10% by 2021.

Mental health problems are distributed according to a gradient of economic disadvantage i.e. the poorer and more disadvantaged are more likely to be affected by a mental illness.

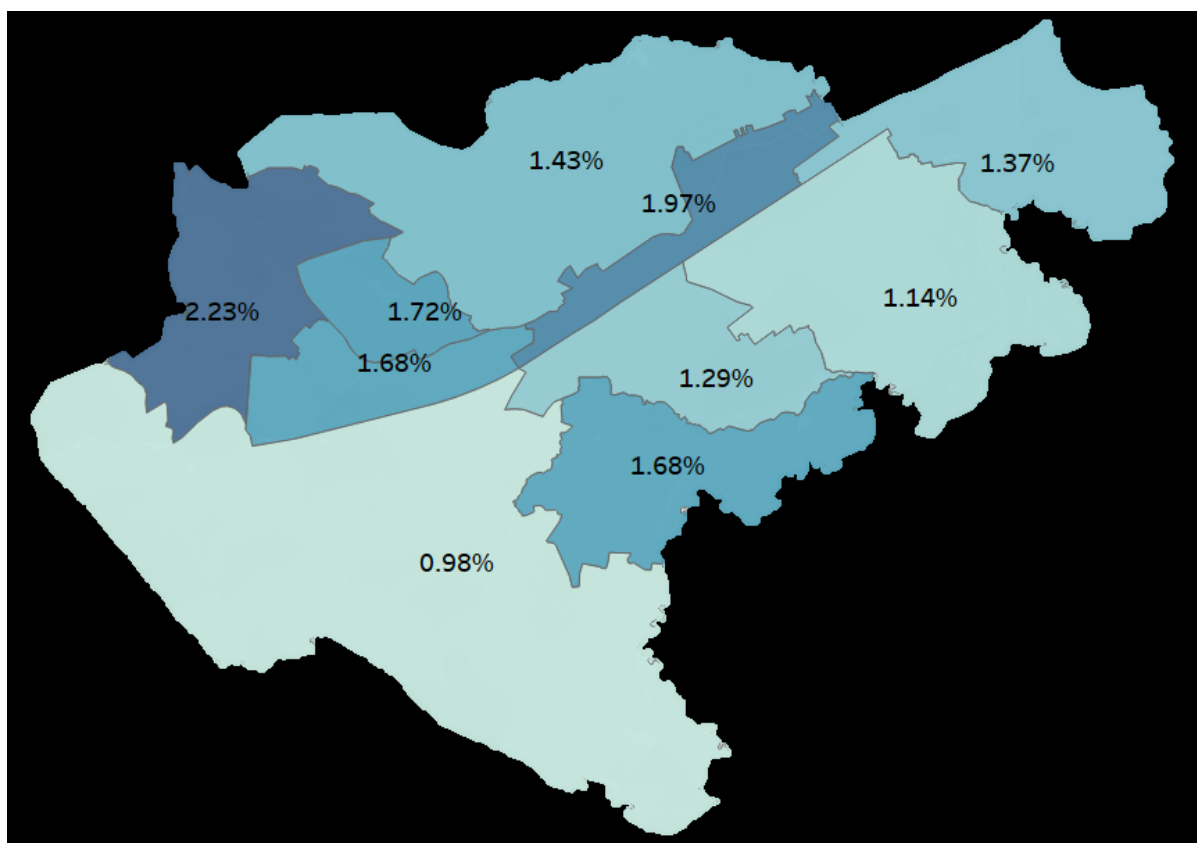
Nationally, one in six adults experiences a common mental health problem such as anxiety or depression. The estimated prevalence of common mental disorders in Woking is lower compared to the South East region and England for both the population aged 16 and over (England: 16.9%, South East region: 14.8%, Woking: 13.1%) and the population aged 65 and over (England: 10.2%, South East region: 9.2%, Woking: 7.9%).

However, Woking has a slightly higher percentage of adults claiming incapacity benefit for mental health issues (1.6% of all incapacity benefit claimants) compared to the rest of Surrey (1.5%), ranking joint second out of the 11 borough and districts in Surrey. It should be noted that this is lower than the England average of 2.3% and no Woking wards fall above this national average. The top three wards for mental health incapacity benefit are Knaphill¹¹ (2.2%), Canalside (2.0%) and Goldsworth Park (1.7%), as show in the map below.

Figure 3: Claimants of Incapacity Benefit who are claiming due to mental health related conditions Source: Department for Work and Pensions – May 2020

¹⁰ <https://www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk/kb5/surrey/localoffer/site.page?id=6soPrqlr3vA>

¹¹ Brookwood Asylum in Knaphill was the leading mental hospital in West Surrey until its closure in 1994. Many former residents chose to stay in the area.



The trend for those claiming Incapacity Benefit due to mental health has remained largely flat across the last 10 years.

Mental health has been identified as a particular issue in young people. In 2020, Redeeming Our Communities undertook a survey of more than 150 young people in Woking. When asked what the biggest issue was in Woking, the main response was mental health, followed by a lack of things to do / being bored and bullying in school, online and through phone and text messages. During the past year, 73% of young people surveyed had experienced anxiety, 40% had felt isolation, 37% had periods of sustained mental health illness and depression, 24% had suffered from self-harm, and 8% said their long-term mental health had been affected by a disability.

The lockdowns as a result of the pandemic have had a significant impact on mental health and social isolation. The UCL COVID-19 Social Study published in February 2021 found that anxiety and depression levels are consistently higher than pre-pandemic averages. The ONS report **Coronavirus and the Social Impacts on Great Britain**, published in November 2020, found that restrictions on socialising have had an impact on people's wellbeing and mental health with nearly half of adults (49%) reporting boredom, loneliness, anxiety or stress arising due to the pandemic. In November 2020 Surrey County Council published a Covid-19 Community Impact Assessment¹² which found that 58% of Woking residents were concerned about their mental health and wellbeing for the following six months. This figure is 11% higher than the Surrey average and the highest of the districts and boroughs in Surrey.

A social prescribing survey of 29 link workers and wellbeing advisers across Surrey in January 2021 found that the most common issues being experienced by clients were mental

¹² <https://www.surreyi.gov.uk/covid-impacts/>

health and emotional support, and social interaction or loneliness. An ONS survey¹³ between October 2020 and February 2021 found that 6.58% of people in Woking often or always felt lonely, compared to 6.17% in Surrey and 7.26% in England.

The mental health impact of the pandemic on children and young people has been widely reported. In July 2020 NHS Digital undertook a survey¹⁴ of the mental health of children and young people across England, a follow-up to a 2017 survey. This latest survey found that rates of probable mental disorder in children aged 5 - 16 years have increased from one in nine (10.8%) in 2017 to one in six (16.0%) in 2020. The likelihood of a probable mental disorder increased with age, and there was a noticeable difference in gender for the older age group (17 - 22 years); 27.2% of young women and 13.3% of young men were identified as having a probable mental disorder in 2020.

Dementia is now the leading cause of death in the UK. 1.29% of the Woking population (which equates to 1,370 people)¹⁵ is living with dementia. This is broadly in line with the UK average of 1.29%. The number of people with dementia is predicted to rise by up to 35% by 2025 and 146% by 2050.

The remainder of this chapter summaries the wider determinants of health and key services and facilities in Woking with a more detailed analysis in Appendix B.

Health behaviours

| | HEADLINES | KEY SERVICES AND FACILITIES |
|----------|---|---|
| SMOKING | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.6% of adults in Woking smoke, lower than both Surrey (12.2%) and England (13.9%) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One You Surrey provides smoking cessation services across the county |
| DIET | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obesity prevalence (8.5%) – highest rate in Surrey Childhood obesity rates higher than Surrey averages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Be Your Best' weight management programme (Surrey wide) Foodwise Foodbanks |
| EXERCISE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over a quarter of adults and almost a third of children do less than 30 minutes moderate intensity physical activity a week | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leisure facilities, sports clubs Cycle routes |

¹³

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/lonelinessratesandwellbeingindicatorbylocalauthority>

¹⁴ <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2020-wave-1-follow-up>

¹⁵ https://app.polimapper.co.uk/?dataSetKey=38d03a57d2f948c8b577839a1cf16543#_=&con_over=Woking

| | | |
|---------------|--|---|
| ALCOHOL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rate for alcohol-related harm admissions lower than Surrey and England | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i-access drug and alcohol service (Surrey wide) |
| SEXUAL HEALTH | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rate of new STIs lower than Surrey and England | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual Health Clinic at Woking Community Hospital (commissioned by Public Health) |

Socio economic factors

| | HEADLINES | KEY SERVICES AND FACILITIES |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| EDUCATION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average 8 attainment score better than both Surrey and England % of working age population qualified to at least Level 2 or higher is above South East average | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surrey County Council is responsible for education – 30+ primary schools, 10 secondary schools, 4 further education institutions |
| EMPLOYMENT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historically, unemployment has been below national average but slightly higher than Surrey Youth unemployment 7.7% vs 5.8% in Surrey Pandemic has had an impact and will continue to do so | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Growth Strategy Strategy with Department for Work and Pensions for youth training and skills development |
| INCOME | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woking is one of the 20% least deprived districts/unitary authorities in England 9.7% of children live in low income families (Surrey: 12.9%) | |
| FAMILY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 14,000 single person households | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Centres and Family Support Programme Targeted youth-work Centres for the Community Volunteer management and charity support Social prescribing Carers support |

| | | |
|------------------|--|--|
| COMMUNITY SAFETY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall Woking is a safe place. • Rates of violent crime above south east average and rate of anti-social behaviour above Surrey and England averages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer Woking Partnership • Woking Street Angels • Your Sanctuary |
|------------------|--|--|

Environment

| | HEADLINES | KEY SERVICES AND FACILITIES |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 15% of Woking is green space, higher than Surrey and England • Air pollutants in line with Surrey and England | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woking 2050 • Climate Emergency Action Plan • Planet Woking • Natural Woking |
| BUILT ENVIRONMENT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing house prices • Rents above Housing Benefit • Need for affordable homes • Overcrowding above Surrey average • Increase in homeless households | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheerwater regeneration programme • Housing strategy • Planning approach considers health and wellbeing • Wide range of services to support people in own homes: Independent Support Service, HomeSafe Plus, Handyperson Service, Community Meals, Careline, Woking Independence Show Home, Homelink, Falls Responder Service, Woking Safer Living and Independence Consultancy Clinic, Home2Home Service |

Clinical care

Physical and mental health and care services are provided by a range of organisations including NHS providers, Surrey County Council and the voluntary and community sector.

Although the Council has limited influence over the quality of clinical care, it can and does influence access to clinical care, for example through the provision of space for health services in the local community and ensuring transport provides easy access to health services.

- In November 2020 outpatient physiotherapy services were relocated from Ashford and St Peter's Hospital to five new physio rooms at Woking Leisure Centre to

improve access, provide the opportunity to link recovery programmes with exercise at the gym and encourage local residents to access facilities and activities they may never have done before.

In addition, the stigma in relation to mental health issues can prevent people from seeking help and the Council can play a role in reducing this.

- In 2019, Woking was recognised by the Alzheimer's Society as the first Dementia Friendly Community in Surrey.

Our priorities

We have identified five key priorities to address the main challenges and inequalities set out in the previous chapter. These priorities will guide us to deliver our vision for the health and wellbeing of the Woking population:

“Everyone in Woking lives a healthy and independent life”

1. We will support, and wherever possible improve, the mental health of people in Woking.

Mental health is a positive state of mind and body, feeling safe and able to cope, with a sense of connection with people, communities and the wider environment¹⁶. Our mental health influences our physical health, as well as our capability to lead a healthy lifestyle and to manage and recover from physical health conditions. Mental health was a strong theme from the staff workshops (see Engagement chapter) and is aligned with the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy which has “supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of people in Surrey” as one of its three priorities.

We will seek to prevent poor mental health and support people with mental health needs, including dementia, learning disabilities, autism and substance misuse. We will achieve this by ensuring that our services are inclusive and accessible by signposting people with mental health needs to other services that will assist them in accessing the appropriate help and resources, and by creating communities and environments that support good mental health.

“There are lots of really good charities and services available to people, but it is hard to know when or how to refer people and what services are right for the situation.”
(WBC staff member)

Mental health is a priority for our **whole population**. In addition, we have identified **children and young adults** as a particular focus group because of the increasing number of children experiencing mental health problems and the strong association between experiencing mental health problems in childhood and then in adulthood¹⁷. Delivery of this priority is likely to involve working with families.

Our objective is to improve overall mental health and ensure that those with mental health issues feel supported.

2. We will identify and support people experiencing social isolation and loneliness in Woking.

¹⁶

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/138253/dh_124058.pdf

¹⁷ Research shows that around half of all lifetime mental health problems start by mid- teens, and three-quarters by the mid-20s.

Loneliness and social isolation are different but related concepts. Loneliness is a subjective feeling about the gap between a person's desired levels of social contact and their actual level of social contact. It refers to the perceived quality of a person's relationships. Social isolation is a lack of social connections. It is an objective measure of the quantity (not quality) of relationships. People may choose to have a small number of contacts.¹⁸ People can become socially isolated for a variety of reasons including leaving the workplace, the deaths of spouses and friends or through disability, illness or ageing.

People can be isolated (alone) yet not feel lonely. People can be surrounded by other people, yet still feel lonely. We will therefore seek to increase opportunities for people to meet or speak (to reduce social isolation) as well as helping build, maintain and re-establish meaningful relationships to combat loneliness.

Again, this priority aligns with the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy which states, in relation to its priority of mental health and emotional wellbeing, that it will be focusing on "preventing isolation and enabling support for those who do feel isolated". Social isolation and loneliness also emerged as themes in the staff workshops.

We have identified **older people** as a focus group because there is strong evidence that many adults aged 50 and over are socially isolated or lonely in ways that put their health at risk. Within this focus group, we will consider interventions that target specific cohorts as we understand these interventions can be more successful¹⁹ and have heard from staff that there are some gaps in existing services.

"We are short of ways of engaging with certain people, for example, single men or father-only families."

(WBC staff member)

We have also noted the emerging evidence of the impact this pandemic and lockdowns have had on social isolation and loneliness in other groups (for example, males living alone where we have seen a significant increase in social prescribing referrals). However, we propose that as part of the strategy review (see Governance chapter) we consider the longer term impacts of the pandemic before determining whether we need to include any additional focus groups within this priority.

Our objective is to reduce the number of people experiencing social isolation and loneliness in Woking. This will include identifying people in Woking who are socially isolated or lonely so that they can be supported.

"We need to join up more with partners to find those who are isolated and get the community back on board."

(WBC staff member)

3. We will reduce obesity rates in Woking.

¹⁸ <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/policy-research/loneliness-research-and-resources/loneliness-isolation-understanding-the-difference-why-it-matters/>

¹⁹ See 'key considerations linked to the known evidence base' at <https://www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/residents/health-and-social-care/joint-strategic-needs-assessment/older-people/loneliness-and-social#key-considerations>

Obesity is a significant issue in Woking. We will tackle it by focusing on the main causes of obesity – poor diet and low levels of physical activity. This is aligned with the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy which has as one of its three priorities “helping people in Surrey to lead healthy lives” stating that it will focus on “working to reduce obesity and excess weight rates and physical inactivity.” The white paper published in February 2021 also references the importance of active lives.

We have identified **children** as a focus group. Children who are overweight or living with obesity are much more likely to become adults living with obesity and have a higher risk of morbidity, disability and premature mortality in adulthood. We will also focus on **pregnant women and parents** as influencers of children and young people.

Canalside, Goldsworth Park and Hoe Valley are outliers in relation to the proportion of overweight and obese children and adults and inactive adults compared to the rest of the borough. We have therefore identified them as focus wards.

Our objective is to increase the proportion of children who have a healthy weight and are active.

4. We will empower residents to live independent lives.

We will provide services that support people to live as independently as possible, do so, ideally in their own homes. This is aligned with the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy which states, in relation to its priority of healthy lives, that it will focus on “helping people to live independently for as long as possible and to die well.” The white paper published in February 2021 sets out a vision for helping people live more independent lives for longer.

We have identified **older people (65+)** as a focus group because this is the largest group most at risk of a decline in their independence (due to ageing). It is also a growing group.

Our objective is to support residents to live independently, whilst retaining connection to their communities, for as long as possible.

5. We will support the wellbeing of carers.

We will support carers in a way that enables them to continue their important caring responsibilities and minimises the impact of these duties on their own physical and mental health. Carers are under-recognised, yet the value of unpaid care in the UK is roughly equivalent to the annual budget of the NHS.

This priority is aligned with the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy which identifies young and adult carers as a specific target group.

We will support **all carers, including young carers**, with the objective of improving their wellbeing.

We have developed a plan which sets out the key actions for 2021/22 against each of the priorities, see Appendix A. In developing this plan we have been mindful of the following principles:

- **Supporting diversity and inclusion** – we have sought to identify actions which will be accessible to the different communities across our borough;
- **Partnership working** – we recognise that we cannot address the wider determinants of health alone and will build on our collaborative work with public sector partners, (including the voluntary, community and faith sectors) to harness the skills, expertise, assets and goodwill of local communities. Staff workshops highlighted an appetite for more effective partnership working and our action plan includes key opportunities we have identified to collaborate with partners in delivering this strategy;
- **Resident engagement** – engaging with our residents in a meaningful way will be critical to the success of this strategy and we have set out our planned approach in the Engagement chapter;
- **Building on our strengths** – in staff workshops we heard how valued our holistic, person-centred approach is by our residents. We also know we have assets, such as our Centres for the Community, which could be better utilised to support health and wellbeing and have considered this in developing our action plan; and
- **Utilising digital approaches where appropriate** – in developing our action plan we have considered opportunities to provide digital services to our residents to improve their health and wellbeing. This will be supported by the council's Digital Transformation Strategy which will include a Connected Citizens programme to ensure that all residents, businesses and visitors of Woking have access to the internet and council-operated digital services. In developing any digital support for health and wellbeing we will consider design, awareness, staff capability and capacity and digital inclusion initiatives such as access through alternative channels (telephone, face to face) and help from others to use online services.

We have identified effective internal communications as a key enabler in delivery of this strategy. Staff workshops identified that not all staff were aware of all the ways in which the council can support the health and wellbeing of its residents and as a result signposting opportunities can be missed. The action plan recognises that internal communications are the responsibility of everyone working for the council and includes activities to strengthen internal communications to support delivery of this strategy.

Metrics

For each of our priorities we have identified the key metrics we will track to understand the impact of our strategy.

| Priority | Focus groups / areas | Metric | Source | Baseline data (period) | Frequency of data release (next data release due) |
|---------------------------------|---|---|--|---|---|
| Mental health | Whole population | Self-reported measure of anxiety where 0 is 'not at all anxious' and 10 is 'completely anxious'. | Office for National Statistics Annual Population Survey ²⁰ | 3.61 (2019/20) | Annual (To be announced – 2019/20 data was released in July 2020) |
| | Children and young adults | % of secondary school pupils responding that they worry about at least one of the issues listed 'quite a lot' or 'a lot'. | Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire ²¹ | The sample sizes historically have not been large enough to breakdown at a district / borough level | Every two years (data will next be collected in September 2021 and is expected to be published in January 2022) |
| Social isolation and loneliness | Older people | % of older people reporting that they feel lonely 'often' or 'always'. | National dataset ²² is a small sample (140 people in Woking), cannot be broken down by age group at a local authority level and is not currently intended to be collected regularly. It is therefore proposed that we utilise the Residents' Panel to collect data on loneliness in Woking. | To be collected in Q3 2021/22 | Annual |
| Obesity | Children and young people, pregnant women and parents | Rate of childhood obesity in Year R (aged 4 to 5) | National Child Measurement Programme ²³ | Woking: 7.3% (2019/20) (ward level data not available) | Note: the programme has been paused since April 2020 and no data will be available for 2020/21. The programme is restarting in May 2021 but the sample sizes may not be large |
| | | Rate of childhood obesity in Year 6 (aged 10 to 11) | | Woking: 15.9% Canalside: 20.6% Goldsworth Park: 19.4% Hoe Valley: 17.1% (2019/20) | |

| Priority | Focus groups / areas | Metric | Source | Baseline data (period) | Frequency of data release (next data release due) |
|----------|---|------------------------|---|--|---|
| | Canalside, Goldsworth Park and Hoe Valley | | | | enough to breakdown at a local authority level and therefore data for Woking may not be available until 2022/23. |
| | | % of inactive children | Active Lives children and young people survey ²⁴ | Woking: 28.8% (2017/18) (ward level data not available) | Annual (released in December). 2017/18 is the most recent dataset with a large enough sample size to be broken down at a district/borough level. Active Surrey is working with schools to maximise the number running the survey with their pupils and hopes to increase sample sizes so that data can once again be broken down at a district/borough level in the future. |
| | | % of inactive adults | Active Lives adult survey ²⁵ | Woking: 28.0% (data gathered mid-November 2019 to mid-November 2020) | Twice a year (May data released the following October and November) |

²⁰ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/headlineestimatesofpersonalwellbeing>

²¹ Surrey data can be found at <https://www.surreyi.gov.uk/dataset/23k5j/health-related-behaviour-questionnaire>. Breakdown for schools in Woking obtained from SCC. Issues listed in the survey: school, your health, your career, relationships with friends, relationships between parents/carers in your family, relationships between children and parents/carers in your family, relationships with boyfriends/girlfriends, the way you look, HIV/AIDs, puberty and growing up, thinking you are gay/lesbian/bisexual, crime and being bullied.

²² ONS Opinions and Lifestyle Survey <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/lonelinessratesandwellbeingindicatorsbylocalauthority>

²³ <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/national-child-measurement-programme>

²⁴ https://www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/data/active-lives/active-lives-data-tables?section=children_and_young_people_surveys

²⁵ <https://www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/data/active-lives/active-lives-data-tables>

| Priority | Focus groups / areas | Metric | Source | Baseline data (period) | Frequency of data release (next data release due) |
|--------------|------------------------------------|---|----------------------|---|--|
| | | | | (ward level data for Nov 19/20 not yet available) | data released the following April) |
| Independence | Older people (65+) | To be confirmed by end September 2021 | | | |
| Carers | All carers, including young carers | <p>Number of adult carers supported by WBC</p> <p>Number of carers prescriptions</p> <p>Number of young carers participating in Woking Young Carers project or being supported by WBC Youth Development Officer</p> | WBC internal records | <p>Adult carers: not currently captured</p> <p>Number of carer prescriptions: 13 (Q4 2020/21)</p> <p>Young carers: 15 (as at 27 April 2021)</p> | <p>N/A - records held on an ongoing basis but will be reported quarterly.</p> <p>This metric is an output, rather than outcome, measure. It is proposed to review this metric at the end of Year 1 and consider if the Residents' Panel could be utilised to collect data on carers' outcomes (including consideration of the use of the NICE Adult Carers Support Quality Statements published in March 2021²⁶).</p> |

²⁶ <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs200/chapter/Quality-statements>

Engagement

Engagement in developing strategy

This strategy has been developed during the third wave of the pandemic and a national lockdown. As a result there was limited opportunity to directly engage with residents in a meaningful way. We have been very conscious of the pressures both council staff and our residents have been under during this time, but did not want to delay the development of the strategy given the impact of the pandemic on health and wellbeing.

However, we have scrutinised the results of other engagement exercises and taken this into account when determining the five priorities described in the previous chapter and formulating our action plan (see Appendix A). These included:

- The **Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy** which was informed by residents' views gathered through formal surveys and feedback provided on a draft version of the Strategy. As described in the previous chapter, there is a strong alignment between our priorities and those of the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy;
- The Woking **Redeeming Our Communities** conversation²⁷ which held a well-attended engagement event in March 2020 and identified provision of activities for youth, social isolation and mental health as the top three community issues. Again, this aligns with our priorities. We will continue to work closely with Woking ROC to ensure our approach is shaped by the views of residents, including review of the results of the ROC loneliness and isolation survey which are expected to be available in June 2021; and
- Surrey County Council's **Day Opportunities Survey** which was an online survey that closed in February 2021 and had nearly 600 respondents aged 60+ from across the county (including 59 from Woking). The survey found that 'walking, gardening and accessing nature' was the most popular activity (valued by 89% of respondents) followed by 'exercise' (58%). The survey also found that after the internet, the most popular way (utilised by almost 50% of respondents) of finding out about local activities was through friends and families.

In addition we have engaged with council staff who directly interact with residents on a day-to-day basis across a wide range of services. In a series of workshops attended by more than 90 members of staff in December 2020 and January 2021, we explored what we do well (assets to build on) and opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents. A strong theme from these workshops was the necessity of resident engagement. We tested our emerging priorities in two further sessions with staff in February 2021 and feedback from these sessions informed the focus groups for each priority.

We have also tested and shared our priorities with key partners including Surrey County Council, neighbouring districts and boroughs, Surrey Heartlands CCG, NWS ICP, Woking Mind, Royal Horticultural Society, Catalyst, Action for Carers Surrey and Active Surrey, drawing on their expertise and experiences working with people in Woking to inform our plans. We will continue to work closely with these and other partners in implementing our strategy.

Planned engagement approach

²⁷ <https://roc.uk.com/woking/>

Resident engagement is at the heart of how we want to work. Our recently published Corporate Plan 2021/22²⁸ describes the **Big Conversation** and a process of continuous dialogue with residents to help inform our decision making and incorporate ongoing feedback into our plans.

This includes a relaunch of the Woking Residents' Panel which will act as a sounding board for new initiatives and creation of an online civic space that will enable us to share plans for the future and provide a safe space for residents to feedback and share their views. We will use these new initiatives explore how best to engage and involve residents in this strategy.

We also plan to launch local community stakeholder groups in the Centres for the Community which will meet quarterly. They will review current use and opportunities for the centres, focussing on the needs of residents in the local area. These have been included in our action plan against the social isolation and loneliness priority but are also a key part of our future engagement approach.

We are committed to engaging in a way that values diversity, recognising the contribution made by our diverse communities to the borough's economic, social and cultural wellbeing, as described in our Diversity Policy²⁹.

Wherever possible, we will seek to co-design solutions with residents, and build on existing approaches, such as those developed by the Resident Engagement Team within Housing Services where relevant. For example, our action plan includes the identification of tenant representatives in sheltered accommodation units and Brockhill to participate in projects to re-open common rooms. We also intend to relaunch Woking Youth Council later this year and engage with this forum to shape the planned activities for the mental health and obesity priorities.

Engagement can take a number of forms, including digital. We recognise that this form may act as a barrier to access for some people. The action plan therefore includes a digital inclusion project which, as well as increasing opportunities for residents to access digital services, will equip residents to engage with the council digitally, for example via the online civic space.

²⁸ <https://moderngov.woking.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=17045>

²⁹ <https://www.woking.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Jobs/bevdp.pdf>

Governance

The council set up a Health and Wellbeing Task Group (originally known as the Health and Wellbeing Board) in 2014. The Task Group has met on a regular basis (currently every two months) and has been chaired by one of the four Borough and County Councillors, appointed to it annually. The work of the Task Group included monitoring the delivery of the health and wellbeing action plan, which encompassed a wide range of activities across the council.

Following the elections in May 2021 the council will ensure there are appropriate arrangements in place to drive delivery of the strategy. This will include oversight of delivery of the strategic action plan (see Appendix A) on a quarterly basis and monitoring of the impact of the strategy through annual review of the metrics described in the Priorities chapter.

The council is committed to the five identified priorities for the duration of this strategy (ten years) and recognises that a long-term approach will be required for the desired impact on health and wellbeing. However, changes to the geographic areas and population cohorts of focus for each priority may be necessary, particularly as the long-term effects of the pandemic become clearer. It is therefore proposed that on an annual basis the Task Group should review the available evidence and specifically consider whether any refinements are needed to the focus groups or wards of the priorities.

A senior manager has been identified as a sponsor for each priority. Sponsors will ensure:

- The action plan is updated in advance of each Task Group meeting to reflect progress made and incorporate new actions that have been identified;
- The action plan includes actions to deliver the strategic objective for the priority and focuses on any specific groups or wards identified for that priority; and
- The action plan reflects the principles described in the Priorities chapter (supporting diversity and inclusion, partnership working, resident engagement, building on our strengths and utilising digital approaches where appropriate).

The council recognises that the health and wellbeing of the Woking population is impacted by a huge number of other organisations and will continue to work collaboratively and actively participate in partnership forums, including, for example, Woking Joint Mental Health Working Group, to ensure work programmes are aligned where relevant.

Appendix A: Action Plan

This action plan captures the specific activities to deliver the borough's priorities as described in this strategy. It is not intended to capture all of the services or projects within the council that impact on people's health and wellbeing.

We recognise that many of these actions will impact upon more than one priority but to avoid duplication we have only captured each activity under one priority.

Actions planned for Year 1 (2021/22) are generally more detailed than those planned in Years 2 and 3. This action plan will be a live document updated over the life of the strategy (see Governance chapter).

| Priority | Sponsor | Activities | Leading officer | Target date |
|---------------|--|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Mental health | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager | <i>Focus group: Whole population</i> | | |
| | | Seek funding (from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) for an additional mental health worker in the housing team. | Catherine Butler, Housing Needs Manager | May 2021 |
| | | Promote and co-ordinate Dementia Action week (17-23 May 2021). | Michelle Chilcott, Independent Living and Extra Care Manager | May 2021 |
| | | Review Housing Assistance Policy to consider how clearance of hoarded properties on discharge from hospital can be funded. | Helen Kempsall, Homelink Manager | August 2021 |
| | | Identify mental health groups / organisations to apply for RHS community free ticketing scheme. | Jade Buckingham, Integrated Health Manager | May 2021 and September 2021 |
| | | Work with partners to co-design and co-produce the Green Social Prescribing 'Test and Learn' site (one of | Jade Buckingham, Integrated Health Manager | September 2021 |

| Priority | Sponsor | Activities | Leading officer | Target date |
|----------|---------|---|--|----------------|
| | | seven in England) with the aim of connecting people with nature-based interventions and activities. | | |
| | | Explore the benefits of using, and opportunities for funding, Elemental (a digital platform for social prescribing) across social prescribing, hospital discharge and other health and wellbeing teams. | Gary Cordery, Community Wellbeing Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Improve the advertisement of walking routes and introduce walking sessions. | Steve May, Leisure Services Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Restart Couch to 5k sessions at Woking Sportsbox. | Steve May, Leisure Services Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Develop specification for a community garden space in Woking for the Wisley School of Horticulture Design and Build Project in 2022. | Jade Buckingham, Integrated Health Manager | October 2021 |
| | | Explore making Surrey mental health services and dementia training mandatory for all frontline staff at WBC. | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager | November 2021 |
| | | Explore making it mandatory for all managers at WBC to complete training around mental health support for employees. | Jade Buckingham, Integrated Health Manager | December 2021 |
| | | Launch a parenting course run by Family Services to support families from local ethnic minority communities, in partnership with local faith and community groups. | Zafar Iqbal, Senior Policy Officer | December 2021 |

| Priority | Sponsor | Activities | Leading officer | Target date |
|----------|---------|---|--|-------------|
| | | Organise, and offer to the public, at least six Dementia Friends Awareness sessions per annum. | Michelle Chilcott, Independent Living and Extra Care Manager | March 2022 |
| | | Identify and assist with the creation of five new Local Dementia Action Alliances per alliance. | Michelle Chilcott, Independent Living and Extra Care Manager | March 2022 |
| | | Promote staff training around understanding suicide and attempted suicide and explore making this training mandatory for key frontline staff. | Camilla Edmiston, Community Safety Manager | March 2022 |
| | | Secure agreement on multi-agency Surrey-wide hoarding protocol (to include joined up database and panel meetings to discuss cases) and implement the protocol. | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager | April 2022 |
| | | Explore the opportunity for Surrey County Council to fund and support staff training on hoarding to improve understanding and awareness. | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager | April 2022 |
| | | Identify the organisations in Woking which offer bereavement support and provide appropriate staff with adequate training to offer assistance in bereavement situations including signposting to relevant services. | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager | April 2022 |
| | | Focus group: children and young adults | | |
| | | | | |

| Priority | Sponsor | Activities | Leading officer | Target date |
|----------|---------|--|---|----------------|
| | | Support and promote Domestic Abuse Awareness Week (14-18 June 2021), including staff awareness training provided by Your Sanctuary. | Camilla Edmiston, Community Safety Manager | June 2021 |
| | | Explore opportunities for pilots of children's mental health services in Woking as part of recommissioned CAMHS service, including the provision of services in community, family and other suitable public centres. Consider wider mental health provision in these locations. | Adam Thomas, Family and Community Services Manager | July 2021 |
| | | Provide accommodation for Catalyst in Moorcroft Centre for the Community to embed mental health services in the local community. | Adam Thomas, Family and Community Services Manager | July 2021 |
| | | Support promotion of RHS Green Plan It Challenge (teams of six Year 8 pupils supported by expert garden designers to design an open green space) to secondary schools. | Jade Buckingham, Integrated Health Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Partner with NHS maternity services to offer antenatal and postnatal parent support groups such as breastfeeding workshops and postnatal depression support groups in Centres for the Community. Explore the opportunity to partner with RHS to provide access to Wisley for these groups. | Nicola Norman, Family Services Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Promote the Woking Mind and Catalyst joint campaign regarding mental health awareness. | Jade Buckingham, Integrated Health Manager | September 2021 |

| Priority | Sponsor | Activities | Leading officer | Target date |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|---------------|
| | | Increase the number of open access youth clubs (Knaphill and Goldsworth Park), and attendance by working with Surrey Clubs for Young People to develop new arrangements following SCC consultation. | Sandie Bolger, Youth Development Officer | October 2021 |
| | | Explore partnership opportunities with the Lightbox and utilise the Centre for the Community facilities to host joint projects. | Rose Blackley, Arts Development Officer | October 2021 |
| | | Family Services to design after school weekly tea and activity sessions for primary aged children at Moorcroft Centre for the Community in partnership with Foodwise and other wellbeing providers. | Nicola Norman, Family Services Manager | December 2021 |
| Social isolation and loneliness | Adam Thomas, Family and Community Services Manager | <i>Focus group: older people</i> | | |
| | | Support Freshstart CIC to launch outdoor projects. | Adam Thomas, Family and Community Services Manager | May 2021 |
| | | Work with Art in Transit to evaluate “Puppets Points of View” pilot project (a 10-week creative response project looking at the impact lockdown has had on mental health) which includes participants from youth groups. | Rose Blackley, Arts Development Officer | June 2021 |
| | | Review physical and cultural offer of the Centres for the Community (including relaunch of classes to maintain strength and balance as part of empowering independence priority). | Adam Thomas, Family and Community Services Manager | June 2021 |

| Priority | Sponsor | Activities | Leading officer | Target date |
|----------|---------|--|---|----------------|
| | | Identify tenant representatives in sheltered accommodation units and Brockhill to participate in projects to re-open common rooms. | Sean Lee, Independent Support Manager | July 2021 |
| | | Explore opportunities to support Men in Sheds projects to reduce social isolation and loneliness, including potential Holme Farm development in partnership with Runnymede Borough Council. | Jade Buckingham, Integrated Health Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Review findings of ROC loneliness and isolation survey (expected to be available June 2021) to inform future plans. | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Launch intergenerational activities in Byfleet, Westfield and Knaphill, linking the Centres with local primary schools for interactive activities. | Adam Thomas, Family and Community Services Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Launch local community stakeholder groups in the Centres for the Community. These will meet quarterly and review current use and opportunities for the Centres, focussing on the needs of residents in the local area. | Adam Thomas, Family and Community Services Manager | December 2021 |
| | | Promote and support bids from community groups for RHS Greening Great Britain which provides grants of up to £500 for small neighbourhood projects. | Jade Buckingham, Integrated Health Manager | April 2022 |
| | | Promote RHS 'Grow Social' and 'Great Soup Share' campaigns in Centres for the Community. | Jade Buckingham, Integrated Health Manager | April 2022 |

| Priority | Sponsor | Activities | Leading officer | Target date |
|----------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Obesity | Steve May, Leisure Services Manager | <i>Focus group: children, pregnant women and parents</i> <i>Focus wards: Canalside, Goldsworth Park and Hoe Valley</i> | | |
| | | Re-launch Friday Night Project (subsidised sports youth provision) at Woking Leisure Centre and extend to Sheerwater Leisure Centre when it opens. | Abby Woodhouse, Woking Active Communities Manager, Freedom Leisure | June 2021 (dependent on easing of lockdown restrictions) |
| | | Support the Be Your Best programme through leisure centre staff attendance of the last two programme sessions and offer of free services. | Steve May, Leisure Services Manager | Fully operational from end June 2021 |
| | | Re-launch weekly junior and adult Park Run events (including advertising sessions through social media and website) and investigate the potential to introduce an event at Brookwood Country Park. | Jack Gallop, Sports Development Officer | June 2021 |
| | | Deliver healthy eating workshops, including cooking, at each of the youth centres with access to a kitchen. | Sandie Bolger, Youth Development Officer | July 2021 |
| | | Progress Club 4 bid with Active Surrey for holiday, activity and food programme in summer 2021. | Steve May, Leisure Services Manager | July 2021 |
| | | Deliver Surrey Youth Games alternative project (for adults and children) with a focus on BAME females. | Jack Gallop, Sports Development Officer | September 2021 |
| | | Improve cycling provision, both instructed and free access through the launch of British Cycling 'Ride Out' programme (a turn up and enjoy social session), | Steve May, Leisure Services Manager | September 2021 |

| Priority | Sponsor | Activities | Leading officer | Target date |
|----------|---------|---|--|----------------|
| | | bicycle hire scheme, and development of a venue to teach bike maintenance (targeting fathers and children with the intention of improving social networks for fathers). | | |
| | | Consider opportunities to better promote the community and concession pricing structure at gyms, including how it can be promoted to families and pregnant mothers. | Steve May, Leisure Services Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Link Central Surrey Health, Health Link Worker Jabeen Quereshi with wider family and maternity services in Sheerwater at Parkview to develop engagement with healthy lifestyle activities targeted at women from the Asian community. | Adam Thomas, Family and Community Services Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Collaborate on Homestart bid with Active Surrey for Whole System Approach to Obesity. | Nicola Norman, Family Services Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Support Foodwise to run healthy cooking classes for vulnerable families and healthy cooking support for care leavers at the Centres for the Community. | Adam Thomas, Family and Community Services Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Open Eastwood Leisure Centre in Sheerwater. | Steve May, Leisure Services Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Develop an enhanced cycling facility at Goldsworth Park (with Sport Cycling funding). | Steve May, Leisure Services Manager | Q3 2021/22 |

| Priority | Sponsor | Activities | Leading officer | Target date |
|-------------------------|---|---|--|----------------|
| | | Enhance the relationship between PCNs and Social Prescribing to increase referrals into weight management programmes. | Gary Cordery, Community Wellbeing Manager | December 2021 |
| | | Launch healthy eating workshops for Woking ethnic minority communities, working with local faith leaders and health link workers. | Zafar Iqbal, Senior Policy Officer | December 2021 |
| | | Explore the potential to add a category to Woking in Bloom 2022 with a link to obesity (e.g. vegetable garden category). | Jade Buckingham, Integrated Health Manager | Q4 2021/22 |
| | | Re-launch Surrey Youth Games in 2022 and increase participation. | Jack Gallop, Sports Development Officer | June 2022 |
| Empowering independence | Julie Mémé Health and Wellbeing Manager | <i>Focus group: older people (65+)</i> | | |
| | | Support the Active Surrey targeted falls prevention programme pilot by exploring how social prescribers can refer into the programme, promoting the programme to care homes and providing facilities as required. | Jade Buckingham, Integrated Health Manager | July 2021 |
| | | Increase the provision of extra care accommodation through the opening of Hale End Court which will include 12 units with extra care. | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Confirm metric for empowering independence which will be used to report strategy progress. | Jade Buckingham, Integrated Health Manager | September 2021 |

| Priority | Sponsor | Activities | Leading officer | Target date |
|----------|---------|--|--|--------------|
| | | Launch 'Working Together for Woking' event to enable community support charities and groups to promote their work and network. This will be hosted in the town centre in partnership between WBC and local community networks. | Adam Thomas, Family and Community Services Manager | January 2022 |
| | | Explore the extension of the falls responder service beyond Careline clients with NWS ICP. | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager | April 2022 |
| | | Explore with other partners (e.g. SECamb and reablement) how their services can benefit from Homesafe Plus services with callers diverted to Falls Responder Service where appropriate. | Jade Buckingham Integrated health Manager | April 2022 |
| | | Promote the Shop Mobility scheme. | Jade Buckingham Integrated Health Manager | April 2022 |
| | | Work with partners to increase utilisation of the Woking Independent Show Home. | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager | April 2022 |
| | | Update Living Well leaflets to include all services available to Woking residents which can support independent living. | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager | April 2022 |
| | | Develop a digital inclusion project, working with library services, Surrey Coalition and Woking ROC, including the exploration of utilising Centres for the Community for training. | Pino Mastromarco, Home Independence Manager | May 2022 |

| Priority | Sponsor | Activities | Leading officer | Target date |
|----------|--|--|--|--|
| Carers | Camilla Edmiston, Community Safety Manager | <i>Focus group: carers</i> | | |
| | | Launch 'Dance for Parkinsons' for those living with Parkinsons and their carers at St Mary's Centre for the Community. Then link these sessions with a local primary school to make this an intergenerational project. | Rose Blackley, Arts Development Officer | May 2021 (for launch – link with primary school will be later) |
| | | Relaunch the community choir that encourages carer attendance at Moorcroft Centre for the Community. | Adam Thomas, Family and Community Services Manager | June 2021 |
| | | Relaunch creative lunches at St Mary's Centre for the Community. | Adam Thomas, Family and Community Services Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Introduce the use of Carers Prescription by Borough Discharge Support Officers at acute and community hospitals to identify and support carers. | Gary Cordery, Community Wellbeing Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Explore with Crossroads the provision of carers respite at Centres for the Community. | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Actively participate in discussions regarding the future of commissioned care services across NWS ICP (including attendance of the briefing event in June 2021). | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager | April 2022 |

| Priority | Sponsor | Activities | Leading officer | Target date |
|----------|---------|---|--|------------------------------------|
| | | Add 'Carers' leaflet to 'Living Well' pack. | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager | April 2022 |
| | | Establish links with care co-ordinators in PCNs. | Gary Cordery, Community Wellbeing Manager | April 2022 |
| | | Explore making carers training (including young carers) mandatory for council staff, to increase awareness amongst council employees and improve their ability to signpost. | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager | April 2022 |
| | | Explore WBC gaining accreditation as a Carer Confident Employer. | Jade Buckingham Integrated Health Manager | April 2022 |
| | | Approach young carers groups in schools to see if there is any interest in the RHS Campaign for School Gardening. | Jade Buckingham, Integrated Health Manager | April 2022 |
| Enablers | N/A | Arrange Communities Team workshops to share developments internally. | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager / Adam Thomas, Family and Community Services Manager / Steve May, Leisure Services Manager / Camilla Edmiston, Community Safety Manager | June 2021 and quarterly thereafter |

| Priority | Sponsor | Activities | Leading officer | Target date |
|----------|---------|---|--|--|
| | | Update team meeting agendas to include 'comms messages' as a standing item, to generate more content for internal and external communications. Appoint a named team member responsible for sharing these messages with the Communications Team. | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager / Adam Thomas, Family and Community Services Manager / Steve May, Leisure Services Manager / Camilla Edmiston, Community Safety Manager | July 2021 |
| | | Consider the use of corporate communications email to allow updates received from teams (see action above) to be made quickly by any member of the communications team. | Andy Denner, Marketing Communications Manager | July 2021 |
| | | Each team across People directorate to update their area on WBC intranet. | Julie Mémé, Health and Wellbeing Manager / Adam Thomas, Family and Community Services Manager / Steve May, Leisure Services Manager / Camilla Edmiston, Community Safety Manager | By end September 2021 and quarterly thereafter |

| Priority | Sponsor | Activities | Leading officer | Target date |
|----------|---------|--|--|----------------|
| | | Promote 'Woking Works' to voluntary and community organisations that deliver health and wellbeing services. | Chris Norrington, Business Liaison Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Explore how the 'Woking Works' offer could be expanded to include advice on supporting the health and wellbeing of employees. | Chris Norrington, Business Liaison Manager | September 2021 |
| | | Relaunch Woking Youth Council, ensuring it is representative, and utilise it as a forum to engage on proposed activities for mental health and obesity priorities. | Sandie Bolger, Youth Development Officer | November 2021 |

Appendix B: Detailed analysis of wider determinants of health in Woking

Health behaviours

SMOKING

The smoking rate in Woking has more than halved in the last ten years. 7.6% of adults in Woking smoke, this is lower than both the South East region (12.2%) and England (13.9%). Smoking prevalence in pregnant women is also lower (7.4%) than both the South East region (9.7%) and England (10.4%).

One You Surrey (<https://oneyousurrey.org.uk/>) is commissioned by Surrey County Council and the NHS to provide smoking cessation services support throughout the county.

The council's environmental health team is responsible for enforcing the smoke free law. The council is a tobacco-free site and smoking (including any tobacco products) and use of e-cigarettes are not permitted in any council workplace, building or vehicle.

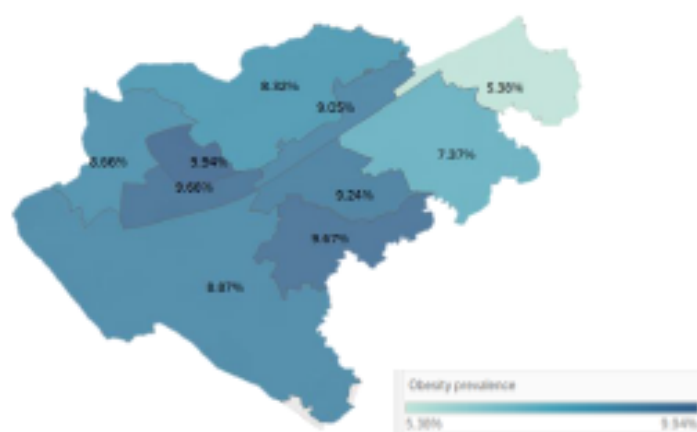
DIET

60.2% of adults in Woking are classified as overweight or obese compared to 62.3% in England and 57.6% in the South East region. 8.5% of adults (8,500 people) in Woking are registered by their GP with obesity as a health condition. Again, although this is lower than the national average of 9.8%, it is higher than the Surrey rate of 6% and Woking ranks highest of the 11 boroughs and districts in Surrey.

Obesity is the single greatest risk factor for developing Type 2 diabetes and adults who are overweight or living with obesity are at an increased risk of serious Covid-19 complications and death.

The map below shows that though prevalence of obesity is highest in the centre of the borough it is largely similar throughout.

Figure: Shows the estimated percentage of Obesity prevalence.
Source: GP registers in 2017/18, NHS Digital

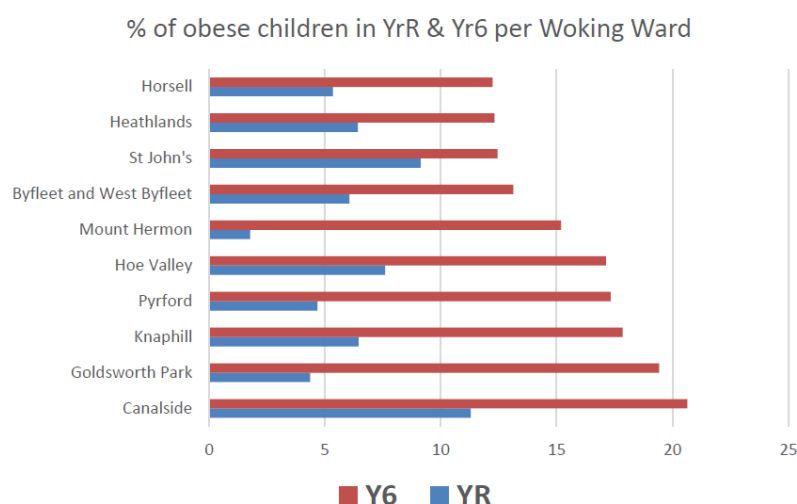


Goldsworth Park has the greatest obesity prevalence at 9.9%, followed by Hoe Valley and St. John's (both at 9.6%). These three wards are the highest ranked wards in Surrey. Six of the top ten wards in Surrey for obesity prevalence are in Woking. All Woking wards apart from Byfleet and West Byfleet are above the Surrey average.

Childhood obesity statistics present a similar picture. This is a particular concern as children who are overweight or living with obesity are much more likely to become adults who are overweight or living with obesity.

Childhood obesity rates in Year R (ages 4-5) and Year 6 (ages 10-11) in Woking are 6.4% and 15.9% respectively, lower than the averages for England (9.6% and 20% respectively) but higher than the Surrey averages (6.2% and 14% respectively).

Per Ward, the breakdown is as follows:



Canalside has the highest percentage of obesity in both Year R (11.2%) and Year 6 (20.6% - one in five children of this age) and is above the national average for both age groups.

In 2018 the government announced a range of measures to halve the number of obese children by 2030. However, emerging data³⁰ suggests that lockdowns as a result of the pandemic have impacted children's lifestyles and increased their risk of being overweight or living with obesity. The Government's White Paper **Working Together to Improve Health and Social Care For All**, published in February 2021, signals the Department of Health and Social Care's intention to bring forward measures to help tackle obesity, including the introduction of further restrictions on the advertisement of high fat, salt and sugar foods.

In Woking there are a range of services aimed at improving the diet of residents, including:

- Be Your Best programme - Surrey's weight management programme, aimed at parents of children aged 0-11. This programme has been provided virtually during the pandemic and has supported nine families in Woking in 2021 to date;
- [Foodwise](#) – a Christian-based charity delivering food provision, training and education from community centres. During the pandemic, the focus of Foodwise has been on food provision to families and individuals deemed at risk of food insecurity. Foodwise has put freezers in four Woking primary schools so that schools can directly provide frozen meals (prepared by Foodwise – 100 meals provided at each school each fortnight) to families in need. In addition, Foodwise delivers to over 30 families each week (290 meals), more than double the number of families supported prior to the pandemic. Meals are prepared at Moorcroft Centre for the Community. Training and education has been suspended since March 2020 due to the pandemic but Foodwise is in the process of planning an offer in conjunction with the council's

³⁰ A study looking at the impact of Covid-19 confinement at home in a small cohort of Italian children found evidence of increased consumption of high calorie and sugar foods and decreased time spent in sport activities.

Family Services for holiday hunger schemes, “Cooking on a Budget” courses, and employing local apprentices to work in the kitchens and café at the Centre for the Community; and

- Foodbanks – Woking Foodbank was set up eight years ago and provides short-term emergency food to people in crisis (there is also South Woking Foodbank which can provide longer term support and Bisley Primary School set up a foodbank during lockdown to support its children and their families). The majority of referrals to the Foodbank are from Citizens Advice, the council (various departments including Family Services and Housing Services) and schools and family centres. The Foodbank is primarily accessed by residents in Canalside (30% of Woking residents supported in 2020 were from this ward), Knaphill (15%), Goldsworth Park (12%) and Hoe Valley (12%). The Foodbank is supporting more people each year with a 48% increase in 2019 compared to the prior year and a further 36% in 2020, and is continuing to see increases month-on-month as a result of the pandemic. In January 2021 the Foodbank supported 740 people, a 126% increase compared to the same month the previous year. In 2020 the council supported the Foodbank with an Emergency Assistance Grant.

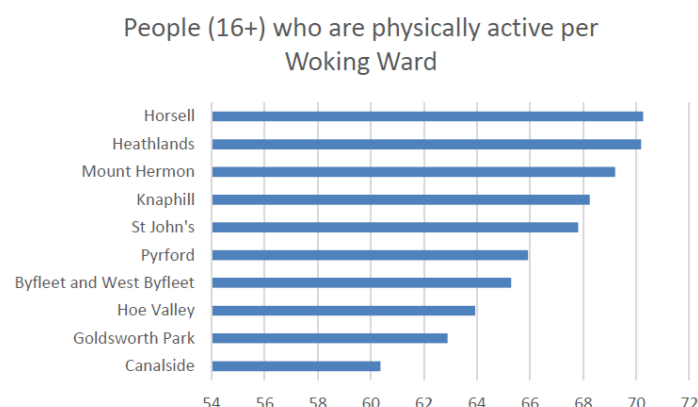
EXERCISE

Just behind smoking, high blood pressure and obesity, the fourth biggest cause of disease in our population is lack of physical activity. As well as preventing physical ill health, exercise can also have a positive impact on mental wellbeing. In a recent survey undertaken by Active Surrey c. 75% of Woking residents surveyed reported that sport and exercise made them most happy and c. 70% reported that they do sport or exercise to manage their worries.

28.0% of people (aged 16+) in Woking are classed as inactive which means they do less than 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a week. This compares to 23.2% in Surrey and 27.1% in England³¹ and Woking is the most inactive district or borough in Surrey. The figure for Woking has significantly increased over the past six months from 24.2%. 61.6% of people in Woking are classed as physically active, as they do at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week (Surrey: 65.4%, England: 61.4%).

This most recent data is not yet available at a ward level, but the breakdown by ward for the May 2019/20 data is as follows:

The breakdown by ward is as follows:



³¹ Source: <https://activelives.sportengland.org/Home/AdultData>

Canalside has the lowest percentage of physically active people (16+) at 63.5% and has the third highest percentage of inactive adults of all the wards in Surrey.

The most recent physical activity data³² for children and young people at a borough level is from 2017/18 which showed that almost a third (28.8%) of children did less than 30 minutes of activity each day. This was the third lowest compared to other Surrey boroughs and districts and lower than the Surrey average (30.9%).

Sport England has reported on the impact of the pandemic on activity levels. The proportion of the adult population classed as inactive increased by 7.4% during the first few weeks of full lockdown between mid-March and mid-May 2020³³. Sport England also found that the proportion of children and young people reporting they were active during mid-May to late-July 2020 fell by 2.3% compared to the same period 12 months earlier.³⁴ Sporting activities saw a large decrease in the numbers taking part, however, significant increases in walking, cycling and fitness activities limited the negative impact on overall activity levels.

The council recognises the importance of physical activity, as demonstrated by its endorsement of the Physical Activity Strategy for Surrey in 2019. The council provides leisure facilities (operated by Freedom Leisure) at Woking Leisure Centre, Woking Sportsbox and Pool in the Park. In 2019/20 Freedom Leisure provided almost 90,000 swimming lessons as part of a mixed programme of leisure, sport, recreation and competition activities, catering to a variety of groups and needs. The programme includes learning disability swimming lessons, walking football, dementia friendly swimming sessions, ladies football, ladies youth boxing and disability badminton courses. The facilities offer tiered pricing on both a pay as you go and monthly/annual basis, including reduced rates for those in full time education, receiving means tested benefits, disabled users and carers.

The council also operates a large number of sports pitches (football, cricket and rugby) and pavilions over 18 local greenspaces. In addition, there are a number of private providers running facilities across the borough.

The council has a Sports Development Officer who liaises with the wide range of sports clubs (over 75 in total) to ensure best use is made of the available facilities. Some clubs boast over 500 members ranging from elite participants to grassroots level. The council has a range of tennis courts and a community membership package at the newly refurbished courts in Woking Park which is hugely popular (775 active members and 77% court utilisation in 2020) and very accessible at £39 a year for up to six hours of tennis a week. The council also participates in annual events such as Surrey Youth Games and hosts the Woking Sports Awards to encourage more residents to be active.

Physical activity can be a form of travel such as walking or cycling everyday journeys. In England, 56% of car journeys are under five miles³⁵ and transport accounts for a third (34%)

³² Source: https://www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/data/active-lives/active-lives-data-tables?section=children_and_young_people_surveys

³³ https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-10/Active%20Lives%20Adult%20May%2019-20%20Coronavirus%20Report.pdf?2L6TBVV5UvCGXb_VxZcWHcfFX0_wRaI7

³⁴ [https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-01/Active%20Lives%20Children%20Survey%20Academic%20Year%2019-20%20Coronavirus%20report.pdf?2yHCzeG_iDUxK.qegt1GQdOmLiQcgThJPowerPoint Presentation \(sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-01/Active%20Lives%20Children%20Survey%20Academic%20Year%2019-20%20Coronavirus%20report.pdf?2yHCzeG_iDUxK.qegt1GQdOmLiQcgThJPowerPoint Presentation (sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com))

³⁵

Department for Transport, Walking & cycling statistics (2018). [https:// assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674503/walking-and-cycling-statistics-england-2016.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674503/walking-and-cycling-statistics-england-2016.pdf)

of all carbon dioxide emissions³⁶, the majority arising from road travel. Increasing active travel (walking and cycling) can therefore improve health through both reduced emissions and increased exercise as well as having a positive climate impact.

In 2008, Woking was awarded cycle demonstration town status and received £1.8m in government funding to develop a three-year infrastructure enhancement programme. Woking Borough Council delivered the Cycle Woking programme in partnership with Surrey County Council to help increase take up of walking and cycling, particularly for shorter journeys within the borough.

Just over 26km of new off-road cycle routes were constructed, 13km of which run along the Basingstoke Canal. The enhanced cycle network provided a 60% increase in dedicated cycle facilities and transformed the old fragmented network by improving connectivity to key places including the town centre and railway station.

The network was named the 'Planet Trails' giving a nod to local connections with HG Wells and the War of the Worlds, which was written and based in Woking.

Other infrastructure improvements have included new and improved signalised cycle crossings which allow safer access across busy roads, better signage and over a thousand new cycle parking spaces, including a dedicated secure Cycle Hub at Woking Railway Station. Since the improvements, Woking Town Centre has played host to Britain's leading televised cycle race, the Tour Series, five times.

In August 2020, a [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#) (LCWIP) for Woking was published, one of the first in the UK. Development of the plan was funded by the Department of Transport, working with Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council. This plan identifies cycling and walking infrastructure improvements for future investment to help further increase trips made on foot or by bicycle.

ALCOHOL USE

Alcohol misuse is the biggest risk factor for death, ill health and disability among 15-49 year olds in the UK, and the fifth biggest risk factor across all ages. The rate for alcohol-related harm hospital admissions in Woking is 506 per 100,000, representing 479 admissions per year. The rate is lower than the averages for both the South East region (526) and England (664).

The rate for alcohol-specific hospital admissions among those under 18 in Woking is 21 per 100,000, representing 15 admissions per year. Again, this is lower than both the South East region (31.7) and England (31.6) rates.

The i-access drug and alcohol service, provided by Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, offers specialist advice, support and treatment to people in Surrey who want help with their drug and/or alcohol use. The council's Family Services team works in partnership with treatment providers where alcohol misuse is an issue for a family being supported and the Women's Support Centre actively supports women with substance misuse issues (including alcohol).

SEXUAL HEALTH

³⁶

2019 UK greenhouse gas emissions, provisional figures https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875485/2019_UK_greenhouse_gas_emissions_provisional_figures_statistical_release.pdf

The rate of new sexually transmitted infections in Woking (529 per 100,000) is lower than the averages for the South East region (714) and England (900).

The Sexual Health Clinic at Woking Community Hospital is commissioned by Public Health and provides free confidential sexual health services, including contraception and genito-urinary medicine (GUM) screening, treatment and follow-up.

Socio economic factors

EDUCATION

A key measure of educational attainment is the 'average 8 attainment score'³⁷. This is a measure of the average attainment of pupils in up to eight qualifications of GCSE and equivalent. Woking has an average 8 attainment score of 50.2, which is broadly in line with the Surrey average (50.3) and above England's (46.9). In addition, 81.9% of those aged 16-64 in Woking are qualified to Level 2 or higher, which is greater than the average for the South East (79.2%).

Surrey County Council is responsible for education. There are more than 30 primary schools in Woking, including five independent schools and two special schools (Freemantles, a school for children and young people with complex social communication needs, and Knowl Hill, a school for children with dyslexia and associated learning needs). There are ten secondary schools in Woking, including two independent schools and three special schools (Freemantles, Knowl Hill and Park School). There are four further education institutions in Woking for students aged 16 to 18 – Woking College, St John the Baptist Catholic Comprehensive School, Freemantles School and Hoe Valley School. All these institutions are rated outstanding by Ofsted apart from Woking College which is rated good.

EMPLOYMENT

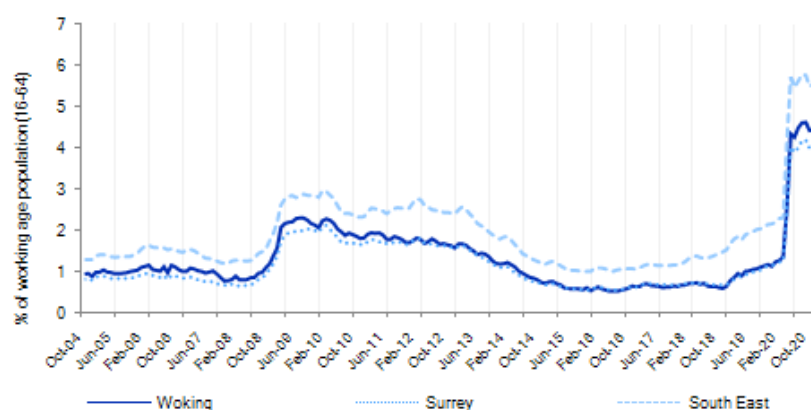
In Woking, 51% of workers are in managerial, professional and technical occupations which is 10% above the average for the UK. The rate of employment (for those aged 16-64) is better in Woking (78.9%) than the England average (76.2%) but lower than the South East average (79.6%). However, this data is from 2019/20 and the economic impacts of the pandemic are now starting to be felt.

The chart below shows the month on month changes in the percentage of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or Universal Credit (UC) across Woking and comparator areas. A clear and large spike can be seen in spring 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak.

³⁷

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561021/Progress_8_and_Attainment_8_how_measures_are_calculated.pdf

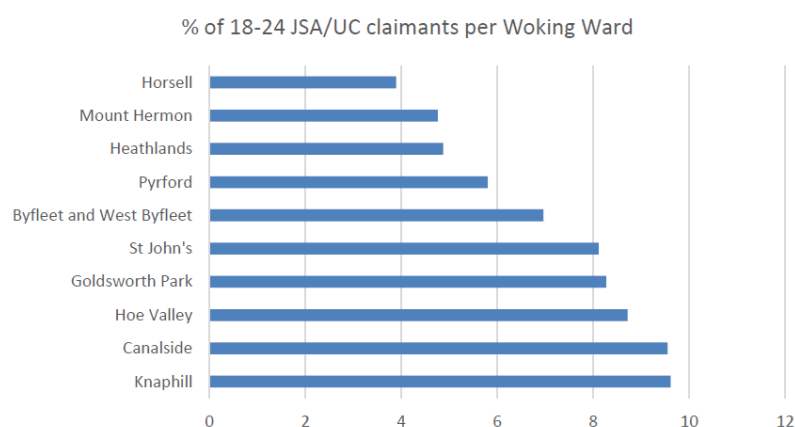
Figure: Unemployment benefit (Jobseekers Allowance/Universal Credit) claimants
Source: Department for Work and Pensions



In summer 2020 Surrey County Council undertook analysis of furlough data to identify at risk employees and Woking ranked seventh (out of eleven districts and boroughs) in Surrey for quantity of at risk employees. This analysis also looked at unemployment rates and identified that communities with the highest existing unemployment may also be hit hardest by future redundancies. Canalside and Hoe Valley appeared in the top two for both indicators.

Youth unemployment is a particular concern. 7.7% of 18-24 year olds in Woking claimed JSA or UC in March 2021 (South East: 7.9%, Great Britain: 9.1%)³⁸. The number of claimants in this category in Woking has more than tripled in the year since March 2020.

Per Ward, the breakdown is as follows:



Hoe Valley (9.7%) and St Johns (9.2%) have the highest figures which are above the national (9.2%), countywide (6.1%) and local average (7.9%). All Woking wards apart from Horsell are above the Surrey average.

Youth unemployment has also been significantly impacted by the pandemic. In December 2020 there were 882 Woking residents aged 18-24 in receipt of UC. Prior to the pandemic there were approximately 250 recipients at any one time.

The council's [Economic Development Strategy](#) 2017-2022 has five themes:

- Economic Dynamism;
- Economic Strength;
- People Skills and Workforce;
- Transport and Infrastructure; and

³⁸ https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157338/subreports/cca_time_series/report.aspx?

- Place Making.

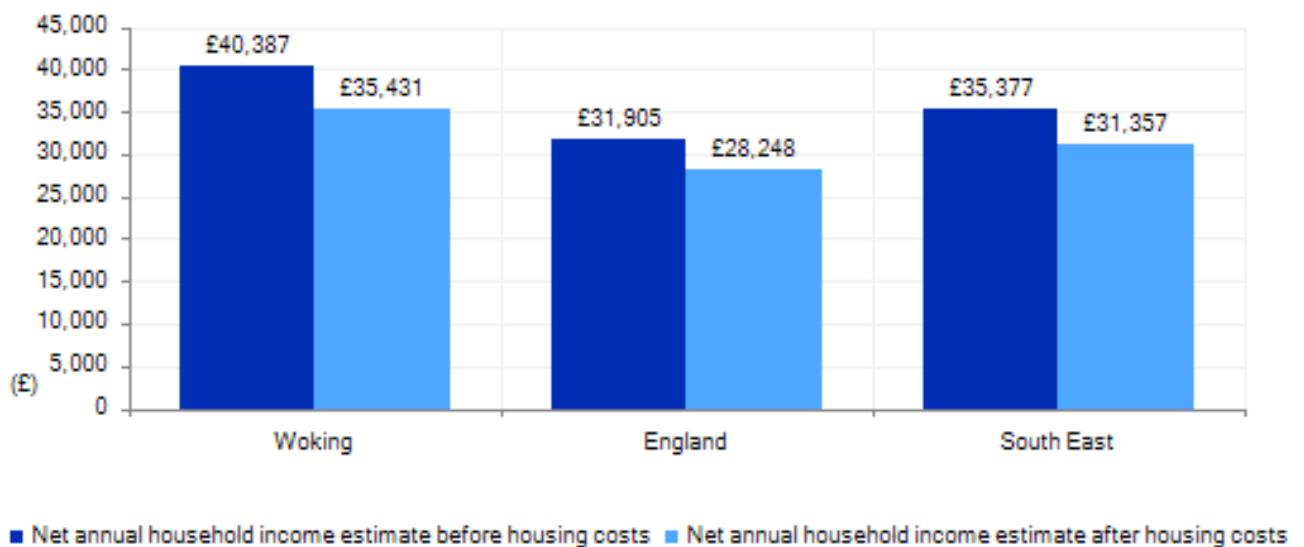
The priorities for action in the strategy include several designed to positively affect employment (and income) in Woking, including encouraging local recruitment.

The council has recently commissioned Surrey Care Trust to deliver a Youth Hub project to support 18-24 year olds in receipt of UC. This project launched in April 2021 based in Moorcroft Centre for the Community (which is in Westfield, Hoe Valley ward which has the highest level of UC/JSA claimants aged 18-24 in Woking) and also utilising centres in Byfleet and Knaphill. The project provides targeted support to help young people in Woking into employment through holistic support, links to business opportunities and the [Kickstart Scheme](#). In addition, within the community campus as part of the Sheerwater development (see case study on page [57]), the council will seek to incorporate support for young people in training and skills development.

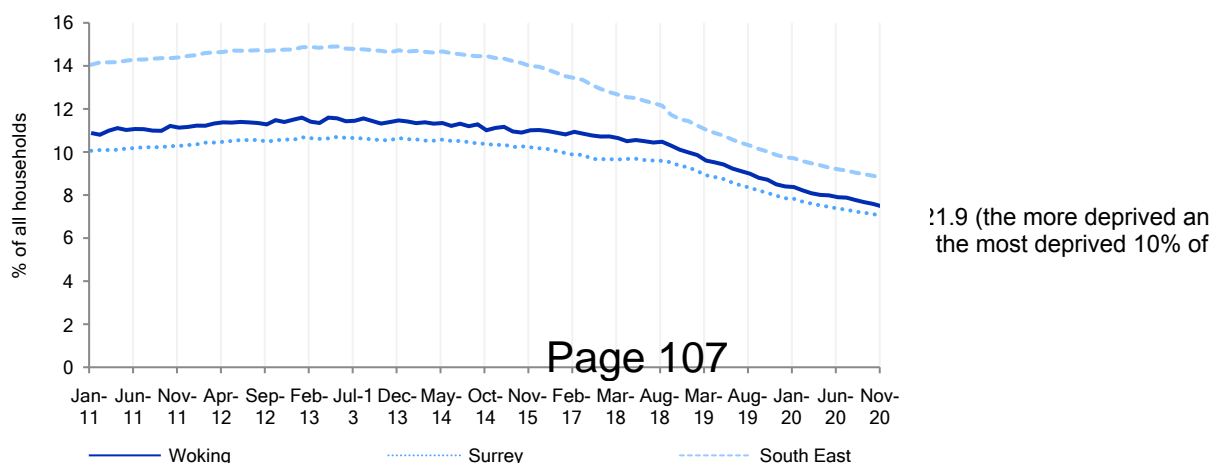
INCOME

Woking is one of the 20% least deprived districts/unitary authorities in England³⁹.

The chart below shows the estimated average annual household income (equivalised to consider variations in household size) across Woking and comparator areas before and after housing costs. It shows that Woking is more prosperous than the South East on average.

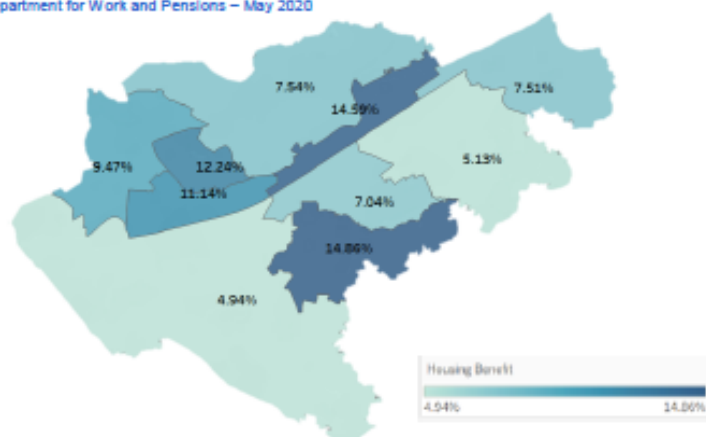


The chart below shows the trend for those claiming housing benefit. Woking ranks second highest in Surrey for housing benefit claimants, although Woking's housing benefit claimant numbers have been decreasing along with the national figures.



The map below shows the breakdown of housing benefit claimants by ward. Canalside and Hoe Valley have the largest numbers of claimants.

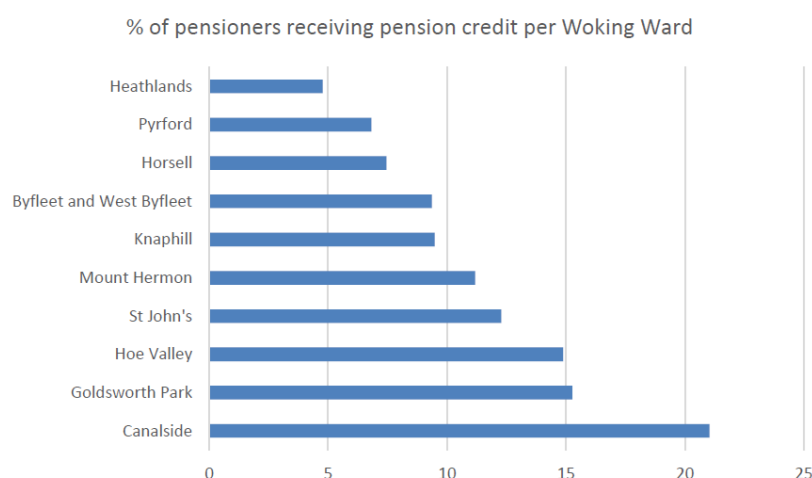
Figure: Shows the proportion of households receiving Housing Benefit (HB)
Source: Department for Work and Pensions – May 2020



9.7% of children (under 16s) in Woking live in low income families, compared to 12.9% in the South East and 17.0% England.

Income is a particular issue for pensioners in Woking. 7.8% of pensioners in Woking receive pension credit, which equates to 1,345 pensioners. This is higher than the average across Surrey (6.8%) but lower than England (12.9%).

Per ward, the breakdown is as follows:



Of Woking wards, Canalside has the highest percentage (21%) of pensioners receiving pension credit and it is the second highest ward across the whole of Surrey. The percentage there is more than three times higher than the county average.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic can be measured by looking at the increase in claimants between March and April 2020, as well as estimates of the number of people furloughed. This impact is relatively evenly spread, though the centre of the borough has been affected less. Areas such as West Byfleet & Pyrford North, Old Woking & Westfield, and Sheerwater have been the most affected.

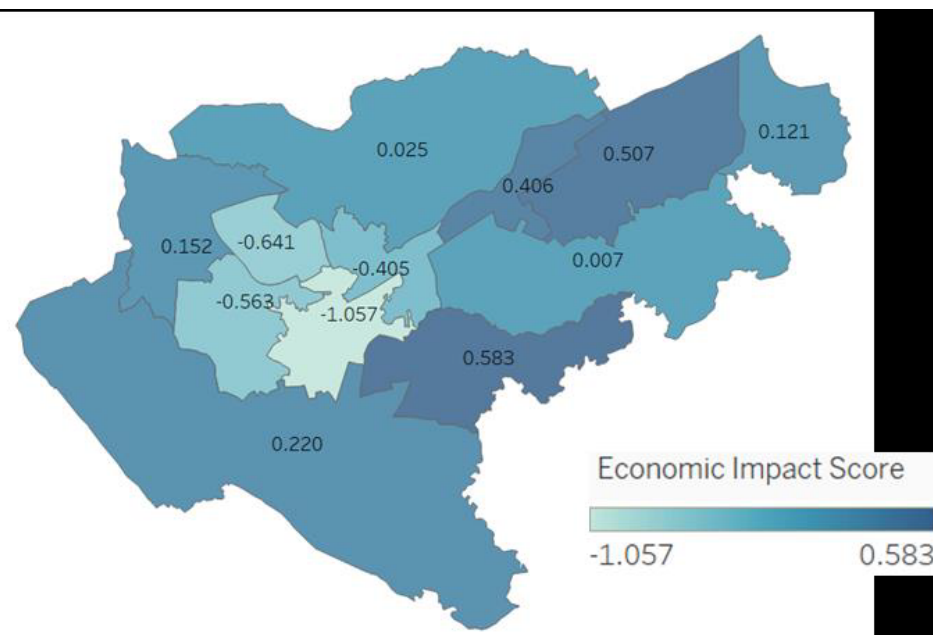


Figure 4: Shows the distribution of Covid-19 Economic Impact across MSOAs⁴⁰ in Woking (unemployment increases and people furloughed)

FAMILY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

Family and social support are key determinants of health. They are particularly important for families (including single parent families) and people at risk of social isolation. There are over 14,000 single person households in Woking⁴¹ and this is projected to continue increasing. There are over 1,800 lone parents with dependent families in Woking.

Woking's planning strategy includes community facilities to support community cohesion and prevent isolation. The council seeks developer contributions to enable the provision of facilities or allocates land to enable the building of facilities.

The council also provides the following family and social support:

- Family Centres and Family Support Programme - these teams work with families and coordinate support across a range of areas including parenting, employment, education, physical and mental health, finances, healthy relationships, crime and anti-social behaviour. In the year to 9 March 2021, Family Centres received 168 referrals and supported a total of 297 children up to the age of 11. The main reasons for referrals were domestic abuse (32%), SEND (27%), and adult mental health including substance misuse (24%);
- Targeted youth work – the council runs targeted support jointly with Surrey County Council for; girls at risk of child exploitation, LGBT+ young people, children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and young carers and looked after children. Approximately 50 young people are currently accessing services including mental health and wellbeing support, face-to-face sessions with youth workers, bereavement support, support with homework and Duke of Edinburgh Award programmes. Following a Surrey-wide consultation, the two Youth Centres in Woking (Sheerwater and WYAC) will be

⁴⁰ Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs) are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales.

⁴¹

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/adhocs/11415singlepersonhouseholdsbyenglishandwelshlocalauthoritiesandscottishcouncilareas2012to2018>

leased to local voluntary organisations during 2021. The council is also using feedback from looked after children and care leavers to shape the services available in the Centres for the Community;

- Centres for the Community - four centres across the borough (Moorcroft, Parkview, St Mary's and The Vyne) provide meals and activities for older and vulnerable residents. The centres are also used by health visitors for baby clinics and parenting support and for hairdressing, chiropody, reflexology and assisted bathing services. Before the pandemic the centres received over 20,000 visits each month and in 2019/20 more than 13,000 meals were provided. The majority of services at these centres have been closed during the most recent lockdown but the council has plans to reopen them in line with government guidance;
- Volunteer management and charity support – the council supports volunteers to register for placements and charities to recruit volunteers. There are currently 1,000 volunteers registered and seeking placements. Many of these charities support families and people who are socially isolated, and volunteering can help volunteers to stay physically and mentally active while also reducing their own social isolation. Volunteer Woking also provides a range of other services including funding support, training, governance advice and information and knowledge sharing, to more than 450 charities and community groups in Woking;
- Social Prescribing– this service links people with social, emotional and practical needs to a range of local non-medical support provided in the community. This is one of the six components of the comprehensive model of personalised care described in the NHS Long Term Plan, and is designed to help improve an individual's health, wellbeing and resilience. Social prescribing looks at all aspects of the wider determinants of health and recognises that if an individual is able to improve one area of their life, it can have a positive impact on other factors. The team receives referrals from a range of sources including GP surgeries, district nurses, and social care workers. They signpost people to local services and activities, and attend sessions with individuals who do not feel comfortable doing so on their own. The service is being further developed by extending referrers to include the ambulance service, mental health trust and the Job Centre. There has been an increase in referrals from an average of 31 referrals per month in 2019/20 to an average of more than 50 per month in the first ten months of 2020/21 with a noticeable increase in referrals of males living alone (81 referrals from this demographic in 2019/20 increased to 133 in 2020/21 as at 19 March 2021); and
- Arts – Woking has a cinema, two theatres and a drama studio (Ypod). A new small theatre and studio, which will be used by the Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts, is being built as part of the Victoria Place town centre development. The council's Arts Officer liaises with a wide range of community drama, singing, dance and arts groups throughout the borough and sits on the Surrey Arts Partnership Board. Activities including the community choir have been run virtually during the pandemic.

In addition, Surrey County Council runs a number of participation groups for care leavers that are open to Woking residents. 'Care Council' exists for 13-25 year olds who are in care or have left care, 'Care Council Juniors' for 8-13 year olds in care, fostering or under special arrangements and 'Surrey Care Leavers' Forum' for care leavers aged 18+. There are currently approximately 41 care leavers in Woking who are supported by an allocated worker.

Carers provide vital, unpaid support to many people. A carer is anyone (child or adult) who cares, unpaid, for a family member, partner or friend who due to illness, disability, a mental

health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support. There are almost 7,000 carers in Woking of which more than 2,000 are over the age of 65, and this figure is likely to be an under representation. Carers are twice as likely to suffer from ill health as non-carers and the council recognises the importance of supporting this group to enable them to continue in their caring roles.

Responding to the Carers UK's **State of Caring** 2018 survey, 72% of carers said they had suffered mental ill health and 61% said they had suffered physical ill health as a result of caring. 80% of people caring for loved ones said they had felt lonely or socially isolated. In March 2021, Public Health England published a report⁴² stating that as there is evidence that carers experience worse health than non-carers, unpaid caring responsibilities should be considered a social determinant of health.

It is estimated that an additional 4.5 million people in the UK have taken on caring responsibilities during the pandemic and it has been widely reported that the pandemic has increased pressure on carers. For example, the Carers Trust found that 40% of young carers and 59% of young adult carers reported worsening mental health since Covid-19. They also reported that 70% of young carers are providing more care during the outbreak - 11% of young carers and 20% of young adult carers reported an increase of 30 hours or more in the amount of time they spend caring per week.⁴³

Woking Council was the first district and borough in Surrey to sign up to the Together for Carers principles in March 2017, and the first to train staff to complete a carer's prescription which helps ensure that carers are provided with all available support. The council also signed up to the Young Carers Pledge in January 2020 to identify and support young carers living in the borough.

Over 1,400 adult carers in Woking are registered with Action for Carers Surrey, and approximately 1,100 of those are actively engaged, for example by attending social events or support events (currently provided virtually due to the pandemic). Action for Carers also supports over 300 young carers (aged 5-17) and 15 young adult carers (aged 18-24) in Woking. The council runs a Young Carers weekly club at Lakeview Centre for the Community and prior to the pandemic ran a Carers Choir and 'creative lunches' for people with dementia and their carers. In February 2021 Surrey Heartlands launched an end of life care website for carers - [Caring to the end](#). The council is promoting the website, which was co-produced with carers, to its residents.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

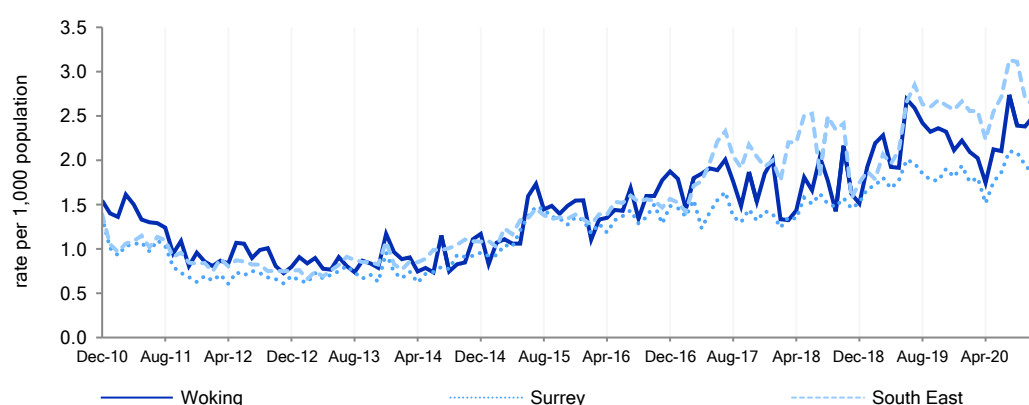
Overall Woking is a safe place to live. However, the rate of violent crime (hospital admissions for violence) in Woking (34.9) is higher than the rate for the South East region (31.2) and is rising, as shown in the chart below, although it is lower than the England average (44.9).

Figure 5: Violent crime offences

⁴² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/caring-as-a-social-determinant-of-health-review-of-evidence>

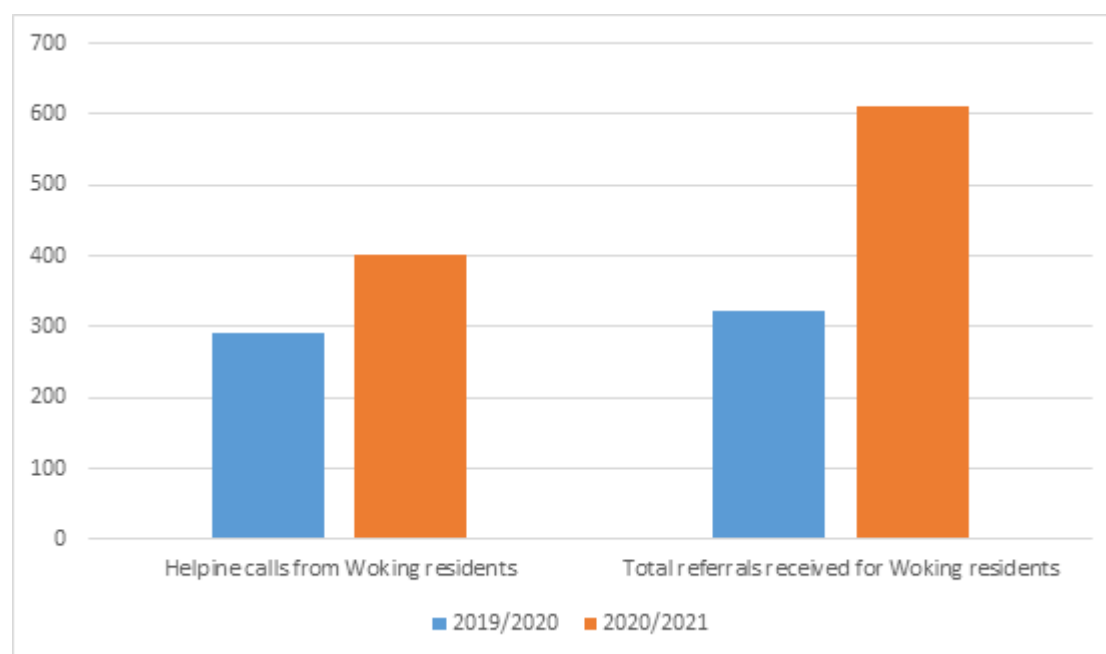
⁴³ <https://carers.org/downloads/what-we-do-section/my-future-my-feelings-my-family.pdf>

Source: <https://data.police.uk/>



Nationally one in three women and one in six men will experience an abusive relationship in their lifetime. Domestic abuse is considerably underreported but nevertheless there has been a year on year increase in the number of cases reported to Surrey Police now receiving an average of 1,000 reports each month across Surrey. There has been an 89% increase in Woking referrals to Your Sanctuary⁴⁴ in 2020/21 compared to the previous year, in line with the national picture. Your Sanctuary has heard from survivors that the lockdowns due to the pandemic have enabled perpetrators to increase levels of control and abuse (they do not believe that the lockdowns have made previously non-abusive people into perpetrators).

Your Sanctuary Domestic Violence Statistics 2019/20 and 2020/21

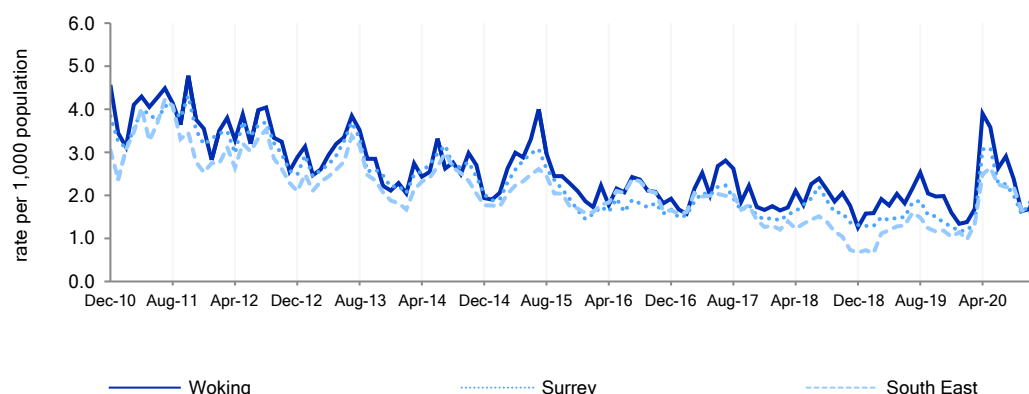


⁴⁴ Your Sanctuary provides specialist support services for survivors of domestic abuse, as well as their concerned families and friends, for further detail see page [54].

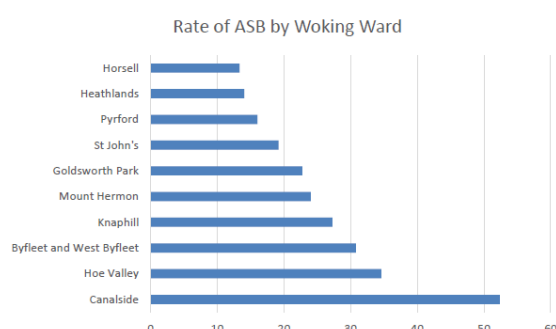
Woking's rate of anti-social behaviour (ASB) (29.3) is higher than the Surrey rate (27.1) but slightly lower than England (29.6). Woking's rate is the fourth highest in Surrey although it has been exhibiting a downward trend since 2010.

Figure 6: Anti-social behaviour offences

Source: <https://data.police.uk/>



Per ward, the breakdown is as follows:



Canalside has a significantly higher incidence of ASB than any other Woking ward, and with a rate of 52.8 it is ranked tenth compared to all wards in Surrey. It should be acknowledged that town centres are commonly the highest-ranking wards for this indicator. However, the Hoe Valley, Byfleet and West Byfleet, Goldsworth Park and Knaphill wards are all higher than the national, countywide and local rates for this indicator. It should be noted that this national dataset for ASB is based on police data and does not include ASB that has only been reported to the council.

Other types of crime, such as vehicle crime, criminal damage and burglary offences have remained reasonably static.

The Safer Woking Partnership was set up to help reduce crime in the area by promoting crime prevention initiatives and protecting the most vulnerable people in the community. As well as the council it includes representatives from Surrey County Council, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, the NHS, Surrey Police and Kent Surrey and Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company. The [Safer Woking Partnership Plan](#) sets out the priorities, which include ASB. Due to the pandemic, the action plan for 2020/21 was not finalised as many of the planned engagement activities were not possible. The Partnership is in the process of developing its action plan for 2021/22.

[Woking Street Angels](#) are trained volunteers who, for the past ten years, have walked the streets of Woking town centre every Friday and Saturday night, from 10pm till 4am, to help

night-time visitors have a safe experience in the town. Typically, they help those who are intoxicated, lonely, sick, vulnerable, troubled or sleeping rough, working with police, door staff, CCTV, the council and medical services. The council has supported Woking Street Angels with grant funding.

[Your Sanctuary](#) provides specialist support services for survivors of domestic abuse, as well as their concerned families and friends, and is a source of advice for local professionals. The council provides an annual grant to Your Sanctuary and has collaborated with Your Sanctuary on campaigns to raise awareness.

Environment

The built and natural environment refers to the physical environment. This includes: schools, workplaces, homes, communities, parks and recreation areas, green spaces (visible grass, trees and other vegetation) and blue spaces (visible water). The environment is a key factor which influences the health and wellbeing of local populations. For example, green infrastructure⁴⁵ can improve health through providing opportunities for physical exercise and boosting mental health by being in nature (termed 'biophilia') and the design of neighbourhoods can influence patterns of travel and social connectivity.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

15.9% of Woking is green space⁴⁶ which is higher than the averages for both Surrey (6.2%) and England (2.2%). However, public parks and gardens green space coverage is only 0.9% which is broadly in line with the average for England (0.8%) and lower than the Surrey average (1.8%).

The level of air pollutants (nitrogen dioxide, benzene, sulphur dioxide and particulates) in Woking is in line with the levels in Surrey and England. Levels for each of these pollutants do not exceed national standards for clean air.⁴⁷

Woking 2050⁴⁸ is the council's current climate change strategy, adopted in 2015. It sets out a vision to create a sustainable borough by reducing our environmental impact. In 2019, the council declared a climate emergency and pledged to become zero carbon across its own estate and operations by 2030. A Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) was put in place, building on ongoing work to deliver the objectives of Woking 2050.

A key tool the council is using to deliver the CEAP is Planet Woking. This aims to engage local residents, schools and businesses and enable them to play their part in enhancing the sustainability of the borough, and ultimately in achieving our aim of carbon neutrality. The website provides useful resources on what the council has been doing to tackle climate change locally as well as ideas and inspiration for what residents can do at home or work to

⁴⁵ Green infrastructure includes parks, green spaces, playing fields, woodlands, street trees, allotments, private gardens, green roofs and walls, sustainable drainage systems and soils. It also includes rivers, streams, canals and other water bodies, sometimes called 'blue infrastructure'.

⁴⁶ Ordnance Survey data which includes allotments or community growing spaces, bowling greens, cemeteries, religious grounds, golf courses, other sports facilities, play spaces, playing fields, public parks or gardens and tennis courts.

⁴⁷ The council monitors air quality across the borough by monitoring nitrogen dioxide levels via diffusion tubes. Each year the data from this monitoring is analysed and forms the Annual Status Report which is submitted to DEFRA for approval. These reports can be found at <https://www.woking.gov.uk/environmental-services/pollution/air-quality>

⁴⁸ <https://www.woking.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Nature/woking2050.pdf>

help lighten their environmental footprint. It also has a dedicated section for younger audiences, titled *Little Planet Woking*.

Natural Woking, the council's biodiversity and green infrastructure strategy, was adopted in 2016 and runs to 2050. It aims to promote and celebrate the borough's diverse countryside and urban environments, while enhancing accessibility to our natural habitats and wildlife. The Natural Woking strategy highlights the benefits that enjoying green spaces can bring including to health and wellbeing.

The council is a member of the Surrey Air Alliance, and works in partnership with Surrey District and Boroughs and Surrey County Council's Public Health and Highways Teams to improve air quality across the county. The council offers a free airAlert service which provides advance warning (by email, text message or voicemail) of high pollution levels to local residents who have respiratory problems such as asthma, COPD and emphysema. The council also participated in the School Air Quality programme which aimed to improve air quality by changing behaviours and encouraging more active travel. This involved raising awareness via theatre workshops for pupils, school travel planning and provision of cycle proficiency training.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Housing is a key component of the built environment which impacts the health and wellbeing of residents. The predominant housing tenure in Woking is owner occupation (71%), in line with the national figure. Woking is a very expensive housing market area and house prices have increased significantly over the last five years. The latest Land Registry data shows that the average house price of all property types in Woking borough was £425,728 in November 2020. This is a 10.3% (+ £39,687) increase since November 2015. The average house price in Woking remains significantly higher than the national average of £249,633.

The private rental sector accounts for 14.6% and social housing for 10.9% of all housing locally. The average private rent in Woking (£1,863 per calendar month) is lower than across Surrey as a whole (£2,074 pcm). However, rents are significantly above the Local Housing Allowance (Housing Benefit) for the area, which creates challenges for many residents to secure good quality affordable private rental accommodation. The latest HomeLet Rental Index⁴⁹ shows that average rental values in the South East have increased by 2.8% when compared to September last year. The table below gives a breakdown of asking rents for privately rented homes as of February 2021, together with the applicable Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and the potential shortfall between these figures.

| | LHA month (pcm) | Average Asking Rent (pcm) February 2021 | Potential Shortfall (pcm) |
|-------------|----------------------------|--|--|
| 1 Bed flat | £847.68 | £976.00 | £128.32 |
| 2 Bed flat | £1,096.98 | £1,291.00 | £194.02 |
| 2 Bed house | £1,096.98 | £1,261.00 | £164.02 |
| 3 Bed house | £1,371.24 | £1,542.00 | £170.76 |

⁴⁹ <https://homelet.co.uk/homelet-rental-index/south-east>

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| 4 Bed house | £1,795.08 | £2,042.00 | £246.92 |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|---------|

The council operates a range of private sector access schemes to assist residents in securing private rented accommodation.

The Let's Rent service procures and supports tenancy sustainment for households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The service provides advice and support to tenants and landlords, and incentives for landlords. 365 tenancies were secured by the Let's Rent service between 1 April 2020 and 28 October 2020.

The council owns 3,361 properties (including temporary accommodation and shared ownership) in the borough. In addition, the council's housing provider partners (including ThamesWey Housing Limited⁵⁰ and housing associations) own approximately 2,200 in the borough (including shared ownership properties). In January 2021, there were 1,108 active households on the housing register.

The majority of housing register applicants need one and two bedroom properties (41% and 31% respectively), with three or more bedroom properties comprising the remaining 28% of current need.

The council's Core Strategy set a reasonable target of providing an additional 1,737 affordable dwellings for the period of the plan (2013 to 2027), equating to an annual target of

The **Sheerwater Regeneration programme** is a comprehensive programme on a 30 hectare site to deliver:

- 1,142 new homes (an increase of 570 with 619 open market and 523 affordable);
- Extensive new leisure facilities at Bishop David Brown School;
- New GP centre, dentist and pharmacy;
- New children's nursery;
- New community centre to replace the existing facilities at Parkview Centre for the Community ;
- Eight new retail spaces;
- c. 3 hectares of new open space and parkland; and
- c. 0.3 hectares of new play areas.

This is a phased six-year build programme. Work started on site in July 2020 with a target completion date of July 2025. The council's commitments to residents within the regeneration area are detailed in a document titled **The Community Charter for the Sheerwater Regeneration**. The council believes these commitments represent an enhanced package of measures beyond those required by statute. A dedicated Sheerwater Regeneration Housing Support Team has been based on site since November 2017 to provide help, support, information and advice to the local residents required to move from their homes for the development. An Independent Tenant Adviser has also been appointed to give secure council tenants independent advice. Compensation payments are being made to secure tenants and owner occupiers who are willing to move in advance of their property being required for the development. A regular newsletter produced by the council keeps the local residents up to date.

The council is committed to working with the community to make the programme a success. In December 2020 WellNorth Enterprises facilitated a workshop for people to share ideas and aspirations. Together, they discussed approaches to develop community spaces in Sheerwater and improve the health and wellbeing of Sheerwater residents. There were representatives from local schools, Muslim and Christian faith groups, maternity services, GPs, family services, charities, community interest companies, retail businesses and the council. Focus groups have been formed to develop shared ambitions and pursue opportunities including new leisure facilities, centre for the community and co-located family support and health services.

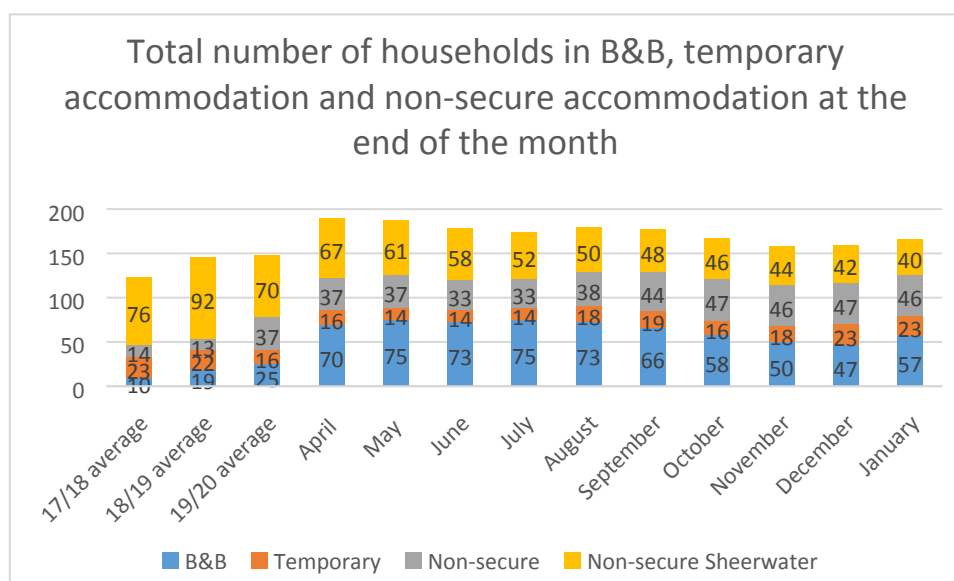
102 new affordable dwellings per annum. Of these, 70% of new affordable dwellings should be in the rented tenure (social and affordable) and 30% at intermediate level (including shared ownership). The council is committed to continuing to work with Registered Providers, Thameswey Housing Limited and private developers to facilitate the provision of 102 new affordable homes each year, as well as, identifying new-build opportunities on council-owned land. 581 affordable dwellings have been delivered to date comprising 316 affordable/social rent dwellings and 261 intermediate dwellings. There are a further 436 affordable homes planned for delivery by 2023/24, including 74 as part of the Sheerwater Regeneration programme.

Overcrowding is an issue affecting 4.79% of households in Woking. This is the highest level in Surrey (which has an average of 3.43%) and only slightly lower than the average for England (4.81%). There are links between overcrowding and both homelessness and mental health issues. Repeated lockdowns due to the pandemic have exacerbated the mental health consequences of overcrowding as people have spent more time at home.

The council is in the process of developing a housing strategy to cover the period 2021-2026 with the following priorities:

- Providing well designed high-quality homes that are affordable and meet local needs;
- Preventing homelessness and helping those in housing need;
- Helping people to achieve independence and wellbeing;
- Delivering an improved housing service to our tenants and leaseholders; and
- Enhancing choice, standards and quality within the private rental sector.

In recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of households who are homeless in Woking. This includes families, single people, young people and people who are sleeping rough. This trend is also reflected nationally, and the increase has been accelerated by the roll out of Universal Credit and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. At the end of October 2020, the council was accommodating 167 homeless households in some form of emergency accommodation. Typically, over the last 2 years, this number has been around 130 – 150. This increase reflects the additional numbers accommodated in hotels through the Covid-19 pandemic and the 'Everyone In' government initiative.



In the [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) 2020-2024, the council sets out how it will work with partners to address homelessness in Woking and support residents in housing crisis. Actions will be targeted at delivering on the following four strategic priorities:

- Preventing homelessness and offering early help;
- Providing a range of accommodation options;
- Supporting vulnerable residents through partnership working; and
- Reducing rough sleeping.

Planning policy and guidance at a local and national level shapes the built environment. Surrey County Council has developed specific guidance, **Creating Healthier Built Environments**, to support and enable health and planning colleagues to share planning policy which addresses public health issues and embeds health and wellbeing into planning decisions.

Within Woking, the council undertakes a sustainability appraisal approach to any planning activity. This ensures that health and wellbeing are appropriately considered. The council's planning strategy includes the integration of open spaces into development, securing spaces for recreation and ensuring sustainable alternative natural spaces.

The council provides a range of services to support Woking residents in their own homes. Given the forecast ageing of the population, there is an increased focus on assisting people over the age of 65 to be independent in their own homes. Services include:

- Homesafe Plus Service (a joint venture with Runnymede, Spelthorne and Elmbridge Borough Councils) – enables a safe, co-ordinated approach to a person's discharge from hospital and provides support in the early weeks upon return home. These services may include community meals, handyman/home improvement services, social prescribing or informing the council of a housing need. The service receives approximately 250 referrals a year relating to Woking residents. In November 2020 NWS ICP approved further investment in this service (from Covid-19 contingency funds) providing a co-ordinator role;
- Independent Support Service – provides help with a wide variety of tasks (excluding personal care, domestic cleaning and gardening) to allow elderly and vulnerable people to remain independent and safe in their own homes for longer. This service provides support to anyone who needs it, for however long they need, regardless of their status as private renter, housing association tenant or owner occupier. The team supports approximately 450 Woking residents and works mainly with clients who have dementia, physical disability and mental health disorders, (including hoarding);
- Handyperson Service – supports quick hospital discharge and home independence. This free service (managed by Homelink) can action minor adaptations such as installing grab rails, undertake home security work including advice and installation of key safes, and undertake home safety checks to identify trip hazards and test smoke detectors. The service also offers a charged DIY service for minor repairs. The service received approximately 1,583 referrals for Woking residents in 2020/21 and completed an average of 132 jobs each month;
- Community Meals Service – provides cost effective, nutritionally balanced meals 365 days a year to enable people who find it difficult or impossible to prepare a meal to continue living at home. As a result of the pandemic there has been a more than 50% increase in demand for the community meals service compared to the previous year;
- Careline - supports people to continue living in their homes by installing community alarms, worn around the wrist or neck which summon assistance and provide confidence. There are approximately 1,800 Careline clients in Woking;
- Falls Responder Service - provides timely support to the 1,800 Careline customers in Woking in an emergency situation by sending a responder and specialist lifting

equipment to return a fallen customer to a comfortable upright position within 60 minutes of their sounding the alarm. Work is also underway to develop an integrated approach that ensures an individual can be assessed at home rapidly, to prevent hospital admission. This involves assessing what services and equipment might be needed to support this. Although the service has been suspended during the pandemic, proposals are being considered to extend it across North West Surrey due to its success;

- Independent Living Schemes – there are 48 self-contained flats and communal facilities at Brockhill. 20 of these are included in the Surrey County Council extra care contract. This unique housing scheme in Goldsworth Park was designed to meet the needs of elderly residents by providing round the clock care, so that those with additional support needs can remain as independent as possible. Brockhill residents can benefit from day facilities, activities, lunches, a hair salon, chiropody and access to a large dining room where meals can be purchased daily. Hale End Court in Old Woking will comprise of 48 units (12 with extra care) and is due to open in September 2021;
- Woking Independent Show Home (WISH) opened at Brockhill in December 2019 to allow people to experience different types of adaptations and assess the suitability of various aids and equipment that might enable them to live independently. WISH also showcases the latest smart technology allowing both carers and older people to see how they can benefit from, for example, voice activated heating and lighting, video doorbells and voice activated curtain rails. WISH is a multi-agency show room and the council works here with Adult Social Care and Sight for Surrey;
- Homelink - provides advice, support and assistance to elderly, disabled and vulnerable people in Woking who wish to improve or adapt their accommodation to continue living at home, or need assistance to carry out essential repairs. They work with those who own their properties or privately rent. This team also administers a selection of home improvement grants for disabled, elderly or vulnerable residents. The council's generous Housing Assistance Policy⁵¹ aimed at prevention enables wet rooms and stair lifts to be provided free of charge without means testing. The council's Disabled Facility Grant is currently the largest in Surrey at c. £1.2m per annum. The team receives an average of 16 enquiries and completes an average of 9 jobs each month;
- Woking Safer Living and Independence Consultancy Clinic (SLICC) - based at Brockhill and run jointly with Surrey County Council Adult Social Care Occupational Therapists, this service supports up to 200 people each year. Woking residents are invited to discuss mobility issues by appointment and trial equipment with an OT to remain independent within their own homes. A store of equipment is maintained at the clinic so that clients can take home what they require; and
- Home2Home Service - a service designed to assist owner-occupiers to downsize into more appropriate accommodation. This frees up family homes and enables residents to remain independent longer in a safe and secure manageable environment. The service is available to homeowners within the borough who are elderly, disabled or vulnerable and are unable to move without support as they have no relatives/carers who could assist them and would otherwise remain in accommodation inappropriate for their needs. Properties are initially offered to Thamesway Housing Limited to enable a quick buyer option and solution where

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<https://woking.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/HousingDocs/Housing%20Assistance%20Policy%20April%202019%20final.pdf>

appropriate. This service was introduced in early 2020 but has been paused during the pandemic.

Clinical care

The council has limited influence over the quality of clinical care. However, it can and does influence access to clinical care, for example through the provision of space for health services in the local community and ensuring that transport provides easy access to health services. In addition, the stigma surrounding mental health issues can prevent people from seeking help, and the council can play a role in reducing this.

The council does not provide any clinical physical health services, and these are primarily provided by the NHS. Social care services are provided by Surrey County Council. As of October 2020, Woking social care team was supporting 1,005 individuals and carers. This includes the provision of residential, nursing, home-based care, supported living and direct payment packages to older people aged 65+ and people with a physical and sensory disability.

The council works in partnership to support delivery of these services to Woking residents. For example, in November 2020 outpatient physiotherapy services were relocated from Ashford and St Peter's Hospital to five new physiotherapy rooms at the Leisure Centre to improve access, provide the opportunity to link recovery programmes with exercise at the gym and encourage local residents to access facilities and activities they may not have previously used⁵². NWS ICP will be reviewing how and where care services are accessed, including reviewing further opportunities for services to be delivered in the community, as well as remote and virtual services. All of these changes should enable and encourage people and communities to manage their own health and care.

[Woking Community Transport](#) (Bustler / WCT) is a not for profit organisation run for the benefit of the community. WCT provides accessible door-to-door transport to those who would otherwise be socially excluded because of poverty, vulnerability, disability or age, including operating community services on behalf of the council. WCT completes in excess of 100,000 journeys per year. Core services include dial-a-ride (e.g. for shopping, doctor and hospital appointments), transportation to Centres for the Community and NHS patient transport. WCT featured in the 2020 Parliamentary Review (a series of independent publications aiming to share best practice among policymakers and business leaders), the first community transport organisation to do so.

A range of organisations are involved in providing mental health services including; Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, other NHS providers such as the GP integrated mental health service (which has had more than 200 referrals since launching in Woking in August 2020), Surrey County Council, and the third sector, (e.g. Woking Mind). A Mental Health and Housing Support Worker from Woking Mind now works within the council's housing department to provide advice and support for staff and service users, and reduce the impact mental health difficulties have on maintaining a tenancy.

The council, in partnership with other districts and boroughs, Surrey County Council, the Fire Service and other relevant agencies, is leading on the development of a Surrey-wide hoarding protocol. The protocol sets out a framework for an outcome focused, solution-based model, offering clear guidance for staff working with hoarders. Approximately 40

⁵² 30% of Woking residents have never visited the Leisure Centre.

members of council staff received training on hoarding in autumn 2019. As part of the Sheerwater regeneration the council has identified a number of hoarding cases and is working with residents on a case-by-case basis to provide appropriate support.

In 2019, Woking was recognised by the Alzheimer's Society as the first Dementia Friendly Community in Surrey. A Dementia Friendly Community is a city, town or village where people with dementia are understood, respected, supported, and confident they can contribute to community life. Woking's Dementia Action Alliance (DAA) was established in autumn 2017 and has a broad range of members from statutory agencies, the council, voluntary organisations, community and faith groups, retailers, theatre and cinema complex businesses and banks. Since it was established, Woking's DAA has provided dementia awareness training for DAA partners, arranged a series of free dementia awareness sessions for members of the public, recruited six volunteer Dementia Champions and organised dementia friend sessions at Shah Jahan Mosque and local community groups.

The council has a range of services to specifically support residents with dementia including:

- Dementia Handyperson Scheme - installs assistance equipment to support people wishing to live independently at home free of charge, such as colour contrast grab rails and toilet seats;
- Palliative Grant Scheme (in partnership with Woking Hospice) - assists those nearing the end of their life to have emergency home adaptations enabling them to return to the comfort of their own home;
- 'Bright' brochure - promoting dementia services for residents living with the condition and their carers; and
- Dementia Action Week – a week-long annual programme of events and activities for people with dementia and their carers.

In addition, in 2017 the council became the first local authority in Surrey to pledge its support to carers looking after someone with dementia through the Carers Woking Together Memorandum of Understanding.

EXECUTIVE – 15 JULY 2021

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS)

Executive Summary

This report provides a forecast of the financial position of the Council for the 4 years 2021/22 to 2024/25 and outlines the approach to aligning the budgets of the Council with the priority outcomes defined within the Corporate Plan.

The outlook over this period is very difficult to assess as the country emerges from the impact of the Covid pandemic and as Covid restrictions ease. Whilst the government has published a roadmap, the lifting of all restrictions has been delayed and it remains uncertain how personal and business practices will have changed permanently and the impact they will have on the local economy.

The financial position of the Council is significantly reliant on income from car parking and commercial rents contributing some £8m and £22m towards the Council's total income. This income has been used to fund a wide range of services for the communities of Woking that would not be possible to fund if this income was not generated. There has been a significant loss of this income in 2020/21 and the first quarter of 2021/22. Whilst it can be assumed that this income will recover over time, it may take some time before pre-Covid income levels are achieved. A full recovery is assumed to extend beyond the 4 years of this Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). On this basis a prudent approach is required which secures savings in the short and medium term in order to reduce and remove the use of reserves.

The 2021/22 budget and forecasts to 2024/25 set out in the March 2021 MTFS assumed the use of almost £25m of revenue reserves to support the provision of services. This requirement to use reserves is significantly due to the forecast reduction in income and returns from investments in the Woking economy. Whilst the general economy is expected to slowly recover from the pandemic the performance of specific sectors will need to be monitored in order to inform our forecasts for returns from our current assets and opportunities for our future Investment Programme.

The scale of the savings target is £6m per annum by 2024/25. A £1m efficiency savings target for the current financial year 2021/22 was included in the March MTFS to reduce the use of reserves. Plans will be developed over the summer to identify how this can be achieved in 2021/22 and how it can be extended to provide an additional £5m saving over the second and third year of the MTFS culminating in a recurring £6m saving from efficiencies and savings per annum from 2023/24 forward, as assumed in the base forecasts. To support the delivery of these savings, a post of Head of Transformation and Digital has been established in order to support an agenda of significant change and digitisation and drive an efficiency and modernisation programme.

The use of reserves as forecast would leave the Council with minimal balances left at the end of the forecast period, and with a budget deficit still to be met. This report identifies a minimum level of reserves that needs to be in place at the end of this period in order to ensure that the Council's finances are in a robust position, that there is an appropriate provision for the management of risks and ability to invest further into service modernisation and opportunities that support economic and social regeneration for the benefit of the communities of Woking.

The Council is establishing an ambitious "Fit for the Future" programme that will establish a framework to oversee the delivery of efficiencies while continuing to place communities at the core of decision making through our extensive community engagement plans and deliver a modern council way of working that is in tune with the priorities for and opportunities that Woking offers. The scale of the savings required will impact on services and difficult decisions will need to be made supported by a clear priorities set out in the current and emerging Corporate Plan.

Now is the time, however, to drive out the benefits from the investments the Council has made into establishing Woking as a place that has vitality and prosperity in order to maximise the potential for Woking and establish our next programme for change.

The Council has applied to the government for Exceptional Support for 2020/21 and 2021/22. This would enable losses resulting from Covid to be spread over a longer period, protecting revenue reserves and allowing more time for income generation to be restored. Very few Authorities have been granted the flexibility requested, and where they have the need has been more immediate than it is for Woking. It is therefore prudent at this stage to assume that this support will not be available.

The MTFS will continue to be reviewed and updated over the summer in order to bring forward areas of search for efficiencies and savings which enable the Council to manage its resources over the medium term and align these to the priority outcomes identified within the Corporate Plan.

Monitoring of the 2021/22 budget will be reported monthly in the Performance and Financial Monitoring Report.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) the evidence base on demographics (Appendix 1) be noted;
- (ii) the priority outcomes, in the Corporate Plan which form the basis of the Council's business and financial planning set out in Section 3, be reviewed through the process highlighted within this report;
- (iii) the target for areas of search to identify further efficiency and savings proposals (Section 7) be noted;
- (iv) the development of a four year Medium Term Financial Strategy drawing from the Corporate Plan priority outcomes be agreed;
- (v) it be agreed to continue to develop activity and financial plans through the Fit for the Future programme to deliver the savings and resource realignment needed in each of the next four years to operate within the resources available;
- (vi) the development of the engagement and consultation plan to embed a culture of this way of working into decision making processes be continued;
- (vii) reports be received on more detailed plans for the next four years in November 2021; and
- (viii) a £500k budget for external support for the Fit for the Future programme, to be funded by revenue reserves or the Flexible Use of Capital receipts where the criteria for this flexibility are met, be approved.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To update Members on the issues which need to be taken into account in the priority and budget setting process for 2022/23 – 2024/25 and beyond.

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| The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above. |
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Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Julie Fisher, Chief Executive
Email: julie.fisher@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3333

Contact Person: Leigh Clarke, Finance Director
Email: leigh.clarke@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3198

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Simon Ashall
Email: cllrSimon.ashall@woking.gov.uk

Shadow Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ian Johnson
Email: cllrIan.johnson@woking.gov.uk

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 This Woking Medium Term Financial Strategy report is part of the Council's integrated service and financial planning cycle. The report sets out the context and provides an overview of the latest position in preparation for more detailed planning for 2022/23 and beyond.
- 1.2 It follows the Medium Term Financial Strategy report presented to the Executive at its meeting on 25th March 2021 and Council on 8th April 2021.
- 1.3 It builds on our performance and achievements over the last year and acknowledges the challenges in the years ahead at both a local and national level as we assess the impact that the coronavirus pandemic has had on the Council's income, demand for services provided by the Council and the shape of the economic recovery.
- 1.4 The Council spends circa £130m gross and £15m net revenue each year on the general fund and has an ambitious £1,866m capital Investment Programme. It is vital that these resources, in partnership with others, are deployed in the most effective way.
- 1.5 The Corporate Plan sets the core priorities for the Council and informs where our spending is directed in order to ensure that we target our finite resources towards the areas of highest priority and need.
- 1.6 The Council budgets for circa £35m per annum from commercial and income generating activities plus margins from loans to Group Companies and other partners which have supported the Council's ability to provide a comprehensive set of services that are valued by the communities of the Borough. The Corporate Plan and integrated service and financial planning within this Medium Term Financial Strategy will provide the policy and priority context for developing proposals that sustain our financial resilience whilst ensuring we remain focussed on the priorities for our communities.
- 1.7 In developing our medium and longer term plans we will need to have regard to the broader context in which we will be working. There are significant areas of change that currently are not fully understood and cannot be fully quantified but will have potentially significant financial impact. This includes:
 - The impact of operating in an economy that is coming out of recession. The Government will be considering the overall level of Public Sector borrowing and how it starts to rebalance the country's finances. This consideration will include overall levels of spending through Government Departments and levels of taxation.
 - The lasting impact the pandemic will have on communities and the implications on the demand for services.
 - The conclusions the Government might draw from the pandemic in terms of the nature and organisation of public services and the relationship between national and local government and communities.
 - Changes to the system of local government funding that have been deferred by Government and confirmation of funding for the sector beyond the current annual settlements. The level of Government funding that WBC will receive from 2022/23 onwards is not confirmed; spending review 2020 was for a single year and therefore funding for this planning period will be announced at Spending Review 2021 which is likely to be in the autumn.

2.0 Current Position

- 2.1 Woking Borough Council plays a key role in the quality of life of the residents, communities and businesses of Woking through services and employment we provide, purchasing from local suppliers and how we work in partnership with others. Against a background of ever diminishing resources and increasing demand, the Council has been investing in the local economy in order to reduce the reliance on government funding sources and therefore become more financially sustainable through activity that is more within the Council's control.
- 2.2 The benefits from the Council's entrepreneurial and commercial practice over that last decade has enabled it to continue to invest in new community facilities, and provide and fund a comprehensive range of services for the residents and communities of Woking that has been beyond the reach of many comparable District and Borough authorities.
- 2.3 We have and continue to work to ensure:
- What we do represents good value for money;
 - We invest in and for the future vision for Woking as a vibrant place to live, visit, work and invest;
 - Our activities are transparent and we can be held to account;
 - We operate as One Council and focus on key areas for Woking Council action;
 - We prioritise the investment available for front line service delivery by maximising the resources available to us through income generation, treasury management and working in partnership with other organisations;
 - We remain true to our purpose and carry out all we do professionally and competently; and
 - We remain ambitious, optimistic and realistic about what can be achieved.
- 2.4 Local Government has to date borne the brunt of austerity and savings it has been required to make are higher than in most areas of government expenditure. All Councils are facing real challenges and the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic has hit authorities with a high dependency on parking and commercial and retail estate returns particularly hard.
- 2.5 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants produce an index of Financial Resilience to support Local Authority good financial management. Of particular note and relevance for Woking Borough Council are comparably high levels of debt and interest payments to support our investment and regeneration programmes of activity alongside a strong financial position in respect of the level and sustainability of reserves and the ratio of fees and charges to service expenditure which has provided the ability to cover the debt interest payments and contribute to maintaining the funding of a comprehensive range of services to the communities of Woking. It is this reliance on alternative income sources, seen by the index as a strength, which has increased the financial pressure during the pandemic as income has been universally affected.
- 2.6 The benefits of the Council's approach and Investment Programme have put us in a relatively strong position from which to face the challenges ahead. This can be evidenced by some areas of national research around vitality and prosperity highlighted below:

Lambert Smith Hampton UK 2021 Vitality Index

This report assesses the vitality of UK towns and cities to identify which locations are the best to live and do business in.

For 2021, Woking is the top ranked location for vitality with particularly strong performance in the pillars of:

- Economy and Business (10th) - inclusive of a top score for wage growth and commercial property investment, and
- Health and Environment (2nd) – Low levels of cardiovascular mortality and high score for life satisfaction and recycling

Other things to note in the index that are relevant to Woking are:

- Strong performance of medium sized centres related to their ability to offer more to their residents in certain key respects, including education, health outcomes and life satisfaction.
- Strong performance of the South of England making up 8 of the top 10 places

Legatum Institute Prosperity Index 2021

Produced by the Legatum Institute which is a London based think tank focussing on the pathways from poverty to prosperity and the transformation of society

The prosperity index tracks prosperity across all 379 Local Authorities in the UK and allows the assessment of development, growth and extent of prosperity across all areas of the UK.

For 2021, Woking is ranked 5th of all 379 Local Authorities using 3 high level domains of Inclusive Societies; Open Economics and Empowered People to make this assessment. Woking is ranked particularly strongly in the Empowered People domain which covers Living Conditions; Health; Education and Natural Environment.

Other things to note in the Index that are relevant to Woking are:

- Strong overall correlation with the assessments in both the Lambert Smith Hampton Vitality Index and the Legatum Institute Prosperity Index
- Strong overall assessment of the South East region and the County of Surrey with 10 of the 12 Surrey District and Boroughs in the top 20 local authorities

3.0 Corporate Plan - Priority Outcomes

- 3.1 In order to provide a clear sense of direction for Council staff, residents, businesses and partner organisations, the Council has set out its strategic objectives in a Corporate Plan for 2021-2022 which was agreed by Council at its meeting on 8th April 2021.
- 3.2 The Corporate Plan for 2021-2022 provides an overview of the Council's strategic focus for the coming year. It encapsulates the commitments made previously by the Council, bringing them together into a single plan of action.
- 3.3 The Council is engaging with residents, businesses, partners and staff over the next year to refresh its vision for the Borough of Woking and set out a five year Corporate Plan for 2022-2027, which will be brought forward for Council approval in March 2022.
- 3.4 The Corporate priority outcomes and strategic objectives in the Corporate Plan are:

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Priority Outcome | A healthy, inclusive and engaged community |
|-------------------------|---|

Strategic Objectives:

- Improving the health and wellbeing of all residents
- Reducing social inequality
- Engaging communities

Priority Outcome An enterprising, vibrant and sustainable borough

Strategic Objectives:

- Promoting a strong economy
- Improving the borough's biodiversity and green infrastructure
- Sustainable development

Priority Outcome An innovative, proactive and effective council

Strategic Objectives:

- Digital First
- Strengthening partnerships
- Effective use of resources

3.5 These priority outcomes and strategic objectives will inform where the Council makes its General Fund and Investment Programme investments in order to ensure our activity is aligned to the priorities of the Council.

3.6 The Council has prioritised investment into a comprehensive range of services for the communities of Woking which has largely been enabled by commercial returns from economic and social regeneration activity. Further opportunities for investment returns mitigating the need to make service efficiencies however are significantly more limited, especially in the current economic environment. The identification of savings options in areas which support our priorities will therefore be inevitable.

4.0 Fit for the Future Programme

4.1 The Council has used its Investment Programme to prepare for ambitious economic and social regeneration which is evidenced through its investment into housing, retail and office estates, public realm infrastructure and promoting the borough to institutional investors as a place with strong vitality and prosperity.

4.2 To drive out and maximise the benefits from our investments and ensure that we remain a lean, efficient and digitally modern Council, we are establishing a Fit for the Future programme which brings together both existing plans and activity and introduces new area of focus into an coordinated programme of change.

4.3 The key components of the programme are being developed as part of the work being undertaken over the summer in order to bring forward areas of search for efficiencies and savings which will enable the Council to manage its resources over the medium term and align these to the priority outcomes identified in the corporate plan.

4.4 Bringing this together into a programme of activity will require some additional investment on an "invest to save" basis to ensure we have the required business and performance intelligence and access to best practice.

4.5 Additional resource is required in the initial key areas of transformation and digital; community engagement; commercial and finance business partnering. For 2021/22 this will be managed within the current approach to managing staffing budgets and establishment. Beyond the current financial years any requirement for additional resource will be incorporated into the MTFS process which will align priorities with the resources available.

- 4.6 It is recommended that a £500k budget is established to enable external resources to be made available to support these programmes. Where possible the Council will fund this through use of 'Flexible use of Capital Receipts' which allows income from the sale of property to be applied to transformation activities. Further details and the required strategy for any proposed use of this flexibility will be reported in the next update. Should the necessary expenditure not meet the criteria, it will be necessary to fund from revenue reserves.
- 4.7 It is likely that the Council will need to consider the funding provided to community groups through the grants process for 2022/23. Where appropriate some groups may instead be supported through Service Level Agreements which reflect activity agreed with the Council.

5.0 National and Local Policy and Pressures

- 5.1 The work of WBC, in terms of the services we deliver and how they are delivered is informed by a continually changing set of local and national factors. The next four years will continue to see demand for services continue to rise due to social, economic and demographic pressures alongside a changing policy context.
- 5.2 Appendix 1 to this report provides some insight into Woking in respect of the health of the communities of Woking and the vitality of the environment and the economy. This insight helps inform the delivery of our priorities for A Healthy, Inclusive and Engaged Community and An Enterprising, Vibrant and Sustainable Borough.
- 5.3 The information in this section of the report is intended to provide further reference and context for the MTFS.
- 5.4 COVID-19
 - 5.4.1 In February, the Government published its 'COVID-19 Response – spring 2021' which outlined a phased 'roadmap' out of lockdown. The decision to progress at each step of the roadmap has been based on meeting four tests: that vaccine deployment continues successfully, vaccines are effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths, infection rates do not risk unsustainable pressure on the NHS, and the assessment of risks is not changed by new Variants of Concern. The Government's intention is that the relaxation of restrictions is cautiously managed so that further lockdowns are not required in future.
 - 5.4.2 In light of increasing cases of the Delta COVID-19 variant and hospitalisations, full progress to step 4 of the roadmap (removing limits on social contact, opening remaining business premises and removing limits on large events) has been deferred to 19 July to provide time for all adults over the age of 18 to have been offered their first vaccine. Continuation of restrictions, including social distancing and wearing face coverings impacts the way we deliver a number of Council activities and services.
 - 5.4.3 There will need to be a longer-term, national approach to managing the ongoing presence of COVID-19 in the population and potential future increases in infections. We can expect the approach, and any need for future restrictions or Government interventions, to be informed by the effectiveness of vaccinations and treatments, emergence of any further Variants of Concern and the impact of future infection rates on the NHS.
- 5.5 Economic Outlook
 - 5.5.1 The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has assessed the impact and provided forecasts on the impact of COVID-19 on the UK economy and public finances throughout the pandemic. The latest forecast in March projected that rollout of vaccines and easing of public health restrictions would fuel a rapid recovery in economic output this year, with Gross

Domestic Product (GDP) returning to pre-pandemic output by the middle of 2022, six months faster than previously forecast in November 2020.

- 5.5.2 The forecast noted that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough), grants for the self-employed, and grants and guaranteed loans to businesses have played an important role in keeping viable businesses going, but have to some extent delayed, rather than avoided, unemployment and business insolvencies. These are expected to arise when Government support ends later this year.
- 5.6 National Economic Recovery
 - 5.6.1 The Queen's Speech in May set out the Government's programme for the new Parliamentary session, with a focus on delivering a pandemic recovery that 'makes the UK stronger, healthier and more prosperous.' The speech re-affirmed that the Government is committed to 'build back better', harnessing opportunities and learning from the COVID-19 pandemic; as well as responding to existing societal issues and those arising from the pandemic.
 - 5.6.2 The central ambition to the Government's plans for COVID-19 recovery, particularly economic recovery, is to 'level up' the country. In the Queen's Speech, this was defined as 'boosting jobs, driving growth and innovation, increasing opportunity for everyone, and ensuring everyone has access to excellent public services, regardless of where they live'. A Levelling Up White Paper is to be delivered later this year, with policy interventions to improve livelihoods and opportunity. This may have implications, and present opportunities, for WBC's work to drive sustainable economic growth.
 - 5.6.3 The Levelling Up White Paper follows the Treasury's Plan for Growth, published earlier this year. This set out that the Government's three pillars of growth are infrastructure, skills and innovation; and that Government's ambition for economic growth is to deliver three strategic aims: level up the whole of the UK (through regenerating struggling areas, for example), support the transition to net zero (growing net zero industries and creating new ones); and support the vision for 'Global Britain' (championing openness to fair and free trade, for example). These strategic aims will need to be considered in our planning and work, such as in making bids to Government funding for economic development.
- 5.7 Brexit
 - 5.7.1 The UK fully ceased to be a member of the EU on 31 December 2020 when the transition period came to an end. A new Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU was agreed in December 2020, governing arrangements between the EU and UK on a range of areas such as trade in goods and in services, digital trade, intellectual property, public procurement, aviation and road transport, energy, fisheries, social security coordination, law enforcement and judicial cooperation in criminal matters. The long-term impact of this agreement on the UK's economy and public services remains to be seen, including the opportunities it could present for new policy making and legislative development.
- 5.8 Woking Borough Council Services
 - 5.8.1. **Green Infrastructure** – The Council is committed to be at the forefront of innovation in addressing the challenges of climate change. We need to prioritise activity in order to continue to reduce our carbon emissions and improve biodiversity, essential to meet the challenging carbon neutral 2030 target, deliver on our climate and ecological emergency declarations and associated accelerated actions. Recent times have reemphasised the absolute importance of the natural environment to our health and well-being. As per our Natural Woking strategy, the Council will need to undertake certain works over time in its parks, recreation grounds, play areas and countryside sites to ensure safe access to the borough's greenspaces.

5.8.2 Environment Bill - In the 2021 Queen's Speech, the Government re-introduced its flagship Environment Bill to be progressed over the coming year, with any necessary secondary legislation following thereafter. The bill was previously introduced in the last Parliament and is planned to:

- Put the environment at the centre of policy making, making sure that this Government – and those in the future – are held accountable for making progress on environmental issues.
- Introduce a framework for legally-binding environmental targets and establish a new, independent Office for Environmental Protection.
- Introduce measures to revolutionise how we recycle; enhance local powers to tackle sources of air pollution; secure long-term, resilient water supplies and wastewater services; and protect nature and improve biodiversity.

Although amendments are expected to the bill as it progresses through Parliament, it is clear that many aspects of the bill will affect WBC functions. Proposals for changes to recycling have been consulted on and we await the outcome of the DERFA consultations on a deposit return scheme for drinks containers, extended producer responsibility and consistency in household and business recycling.

5.8.3 Climate Change - The UK will host the COP26 summit in Glasgow in November, the UN's climate change conference. The UK Government is undertaking work with other UN nations to reach an agreement on how to tackle climate change. We expect Government funds and initiatives to be launched in the run-up to the conference, which may present opportunities for WBC. The Government has also committed to publish its comprehensive net zero strategy on how it will meet the national net zero target in advance of the conference. Any agreement reached at the conference to tackling climate change in the next decade will inform the national approach to delivering net zero and some of WBC's future plans.

Numerous Flood infrastructure schemes on the Council's capital investment programme have been deferred in response to the challenges WBC are facing to manage within the forecast resources available. A number of such projects are joint funded with partners and all at different stages from feasibility to implementation stage. Separately officers are working closely with Surrey County Council to identify and deliver a number of local flood interventions to improve flood resilience.

5.8.4 Homelessness – There is likely to be ongoing high demand for our homelessness services (including emergency accommodation), relating to housing and supporting rough sleepers accommodated under the Government's "Everyone In" initiative and the anticipated surge in evictions following the lifting of the Covid-19 eviction freeze. High private rents (compared to the Local Housing Allowance), the benefit cap and lack of employment opportunities will all exacerbate this.

5.8.5 Landlord Services – The decision has been made to bring Housing and Asset Management services back in-house from April 2022 and to directly procure repairs and maintenance works and services through third party contractor. Whilst estimates have been made as to the financial impact of this (anticipated saving c.£130,000 per annum), the actual effect will not become clear until later in 2021/22 and through 2022/23.

5.8.6 Affordable and Decent Housing – The Borough has an acute need for more affordable homes and a requirement to invest in our housing stock to meet Decent Homes standards and carbon reduction targets. The lack of financial capacity within the Housing Revenue Account will severely constrain the Council's ability to respond to these.

5.8.9 Workforce - Following introduction of the Government's 'stay at home' message in March 2020, the Council moved quickly to support all staff to work from home where this was appropriate to their role. Routine projects to upgrade IT software and refresh equipment were

already well progressed and this enabled the majority of staff to work remotely with relative ease.

The impact of the pandemic has provided an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate our planned changes to how we work in the future, and as the easing of the lockdown restrictions continues, the Council is planning future working arrangements and the safe return to the workplace.

Our planning includes considerations of working practices and models of service delivery. Using feedback from teams about the successes and challenges of working remotely over the last year, as well as the needs of the service, the Council has established a project to evolve its working practices and spaces to ensure we have modern and flexible workspaces that enable hybrid ways of working.

Human Resources and Organisational Development, Property and IT Services are working collaboratively to provide a holistic response to changing working practices. IT Services are reviewing an interim solution for video conferencing equipment in meeting rooms and planning the rollout of Microsoft O365 which will see the migration to cloud hosted solutions which supports greater flexible working and introduction of collaborative working solutions.

New working practices will drive efficiency, as well as significantly reduce carbon emissions through a reduced requirement for staff travel. We also expect the success of hybrid working arrangements to enable us to attract and secure job applicants from a wide geography.

5.8.10 Digital - A Digital Strategy is being developed to provide a framework to connect corporate and departmental digital technology investment decisions and to provide a One Council view of the development of digital technology and skills. The vision is for WBC to be known for digital enterprise. A leading economic hub, driving prosperity and growth and attracting inward investment. With super-high connectivity, we will lead the way on smart, sustainable growth.

5.8.11 Procurement Green Paper and Bill - Following the UK's exit from the EU, the Government is taking the opportunity to replace the current procurement regime, which was transposed from EU procurement directives. In the 2021 Queen's Speech, the Procurement Bill was announced which intends to simplify procurement in the public sector. This will overhaul the complex procurement procedures and replace them with three simple modern procedures.

The Government believes the benefits will include increased transparency, simpler accessibility for suppliers, increasing consideration for wider social value and tackling unacceptable behaviour more easily (such as supplier fraud). These changes will take place over the next 18 months to two years.

5.8.12 Cultural sector recovery - Cultural and heritage destinations, visitor attractions and hospitality contribute to the Woking economy and support local health and wellbeing. These sectors were significantly affected by national restrictions in response to COVID19. National bodies, such as Historic England and Arts Council England, are campaigning for continued financial support, with the £1.57bn Cultural Recovery Fund being the most significant form of financial support.

In June, the Government published its Tourism Recovery Plan to support a growing, dynamic, sustainable and world-leading tourism sector in all parts of the UK. The plan aims to recover domestic overnight trip volume and spend to 2019 levels by the end of 2022, and inbound visitor numbers and spend by the end of 2023.

5.8.13 Health and Wellbeing – The Health and Wellbeing Strategy and associated action plan sets out the background, objectives and priority actions for the Council on this challenging

agenda. Demographic change is likely to present additional demands over time and future resource planning will need to consider the greater use of digital infrastructure and stronger partnership working with multiple agencies, including the County Council, in order to manage cost pressures and service demands.

6.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 6.1 The Council has a bold vision to be in constant communication with residents and to have an embedded culture of consultation in how it operates and makes decisions that are in the best interests of the communities of Woking Borough Council.
- 6.2 Investment has been made into an on-line civic engagement digital platform, the Woking Community Forum, and a representative Residents Panel has been established. At the time of this report the Woking Community Forum has already hosted engagement on the Housing Strategy and Electric Charging Points.
- 6.3 The first meeting of the Residents Panel was on the 7th July. It was webcast from the Council Chamber and also accommodated some socially distanced in person attendance from Residents Panel members. There are in excess of 750 residents who have registered to be on the Panel and they provide a good representation of our resident community for us to undertake detailed engagement on the issues that are of the greatest importance to them.
- 6.4 We engaged with the Panel on a programme of engagement activity for the year and have started to plan the details of this engagement, thinking about how we can use innovative, digital and interactive methods that give us the best reach into our communities and ensure inclusivity and diversity of voice.
- 6.5 The Council faces significant financial challenges and it also has an ambitious development and growth agenda. It is critical that the views of residents, businesses, partners and staff are sought in setting out a clear vision for the future and clear priorities that will guide the development of our five year Corporate Plan for 2022-2027.
- 6.6 Our vision for community engagement, the activity we have already delivered and the plans we are putting in place will establish a culture of trust as we collectively invest in the future for the communities of Woking. Our engagement approach will enable the Council to understand what people value and what their hopes are for the future to help us shape a Borough that works for all. It will provide a shared vision about what people want Woking to be like as a place to live and work and set out our priorities.
- 6.7 The community engagement plan will provide the approach to a programme of constant communication with residents and communities so that feedback forms part of decision making and setting the corporate priorities for the Council.

7.0 Summary Financial Forecast

- 7.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) report agreed by Council at its meeting on 8th April 2021 identified a budget shortfall by the end of 2024/25 of £3.358m after assuming £3m recurring efficiency savings and forecasting opportunities from increasing some areas of fees and charges. The table below is replicated from the 8th April Council report for ease of reference.

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY - MARCH 2021

| | 2021/22 £'000 | 2022/23 £'000 | 2023/24 £'000 | 2024/25 £'000 | TOTAL £'000 |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <u>In year Pressures</u> | | | | | |
| Remove use of Reserves 2021/22 | | 9,562 | | | 9,562 |
| Remove Business Rates pooling/Collection fund surplus/deficit | | 244 | | -68 | 176 |
| General Service Pressures | | 725 | 725 | 725 | 2,175 |
| Potential SCC Funding reductions | | | 153 | | 153 |
| Land Charges transfer to Land Registry | | 80 | | | 80 |
| <u>Funding and Council Tax</u> | | | | | |
| Reduce reliance on New Homes Bonus to zero | | 200 | | | 200 |
| Government Funding reductions | | 794 | 448 | 432 | 1,674 |
| <u>Investment Programme pressures:</u> | | | | | |
| Investment Programme projects | | 885 | 747 | 562 | 2,194 |
| Town Centre Car Parks financing costs | -631 | 1,359 | 386 | | 1,114 |
| Increase in interest rate | 117 | | | | 117 |
| Working Gateway - loss of rents | | | 350 | | 350 |
| York Road Project | | | 160 | | 160 |
| Reduction in TEL/TCMK annuity interest | | 53 | 75 | 75 | 203 |
| | -514 | 13,902 | 3,044 | 1,726 | 18,158 |
| Funded by: | | | | | |
| <u>Economic Recovery</u> | | | | | |
| Car Parking | 318 | -1,225 | -764 | | -1,671 |
| Commercial Rents - removing provision for irrecoverable debts | -1,871 | -1,939 | | | -3,810 |
| Commercial Rents - recovery of some vacant units | | | -250 | -285 | -535 |
| Leisure income | | -116 | | | -116 |
| | -1,553 | -3,280 | -1,014 | -285 | -6,132 |
| <u>Other Contributions</u> | | | | | |
| Increase in Taxbase | | -310 | -80 | -82 | -471 |
| Council Tax increase | | -208 | -214 | -220 | -642 |
| Fees and Charges - Car Park income 10p a year from Oct 21 | -200 | -400 | -400 | -200 | -1,200 |
| Fees and Charges - New Car Park income | -130 | -510 | -530 | 0 | -1,170 |
| Less: car park operational costs (TBC) | | | | | |
| Investment in Housing | | -687 | -749 | -749 | -2,185 |
| Productivity and Procurement Saving Target | -1,000 | -1,000 | -500 | -500 | -3,000 |
| | -1,330 | -3,115 | -2,473 | -1,751 | -8,669 |
| In year cost pressure/saving | -3,397 | 7,507 | -442 | -310 | 3,358 |
| Annual Use of Reserves | -3,397 | 4,110 | 3,668 | 3,358 | |

- 7.2 The assumptions within this table have been reviewed and at this stage it is still prudent to use the same information and assumptions for our planning purposes and update these as an integral part of developing options to address the budget shortfall and reporting back to the Executive to its meeting on 18th November 2021.
- 7.3 Areas of search for proposals to cover the budget shortfall will be undertaken through the Fit for the Future programme over the summer and reported back to the above meeting of the Executive.
- 7.4 The use of reserves as forecast above would leave the Council with minimal balances left at the end of the MTFS period, and with a budget deficit still to be met. To ensure that a sufficient level of reserves are maintained, and to provide options to enable a balanced budget beyond

2024/25, it is proposed that a further £1m of options to cover the budget shortfall are developed for each year 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25.

- 7.5 A high level overview of the budget shortfall and targets for closing this is highlighted in the table below. The table excludes the recovery of income over the MTFS as the economy emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic which is shown separately in the forecast.
- 7.6 The underlying budget shortfall results from income growth from a lower level than previously assumed, reductions in commercial income incorporated into the 2021/22 base budget, and previously known pressures from the Council's Investment Programme (including new car park asset), and assumed government funding reductions.
- 7.7 The Budget shortfall is cumulative and is shown before the use of reserves or savings targets. It reflects the non-Covid related difference between income and expenditure which must be met either through savings, additional income, or use of reserves. Proposed targets for the efficiency programme, additional savings and resulting necessary use of reserves are shown for each year.

| | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Budget Shortfall | -1.8 | -4.0 | -5.1 | -6.0 |
| Efficiency Programme | -1.0 | -2.0 | -2.5 | -3.0 |
| Additional Savings Target | | -1.0 | -2.0 | -3.0 |
| Use of Reserves for General Fund | -0.8 | -1.0 | -0.6 | 0.0 |

- 7.8 There will be a number of approaches which will be used to develop proposals for closing the budget shortfall which will include:
- Reviewing financial and service pressures
 - Updating confirmed funding from Government
 - Organisational efficiencies
 - Reviewing fees and charges and activity projections
 - Reviewing treasury management and investment costs
 - Working with partners
 - Searching for alternative and additional sources of funding
 - Taking a commissioning approach to the funding of services
 - Service reviews and prioritisation

Parking Charges

- 7.9 The MTFS approved by Council in April 2021 assumed that parking charges would be increased by 10p an hour from 1 October 2021. This was forecast to generate £200k additional income in 2021/22, £400k in a full year.

- 7.10 Parking charges in the town centre were last increased in October 2019. Previous financial plans have assumed that the hourly rate would be increased on completion of the new improved parking facilities on the launch of Victoria Place.
- 7.11 It is critical that the Council achieves the return on investment in its town centre and that parking income contributes to the costs of the new car parks. However, the current economic climate is uncertain, and customer demand unpredictable. It is therefore recommended that both the level of charges, and the charging methodology, be reviewed in the context of the current environment with proposed changes to be considered by Council in September.

8.0 Investment Programme

- 8.1 A summary of the Investment Programme (IP) approved by the Council in February 2021 is set out below:

| | PLANNED EXPENDITURE | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 20/21 | 21/22 | 22/23 | 23/24 | 24/25 |
| | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| General Fund | 441,916 | 179,645 | 52,579 | 33,764 | 5,616 |
| Housing Investment Programme | 165,858 | 178,642 | 125,594 | 149,339 | 532,555 |
| Total Investment Programme | 607,774 | 358,287 | 178,173 | 183,103 | 538,171 |

- 8.2 Over the summer the IP will be updated to reflect the capital outturn at 31 March 2021 and slippage into 2021/22. A number of projects were suspended in November 2020 while the potential financial impact of the pandemic was established. It is unlikely that any projects currently on the suspended list will be incorporated into the funded plan while the Council has a significant level of budget savings to be achieved to achieve a sustainable financial position.
- 8.3 Investment will continue on the Council's key active projects: Victoria Square, Sheerwater, the Town Centre HIF and Housing provision through Thamesway Housing. Where funding is available it may be possible to progress other projects.
- 8.4 The Investment Programme will be further reviewed with the objective of minimising use of revenue reserves. This may result in recommending changes to the current funding of projects to retain reserves where borrowing or other capital resources could be applied.
- 8.5 The MTFS in April approved a budget for investing in commercial units in order to secure new tenants. As the year progresses further proposals may be brought forward which seek investment in order to restore income. The business case for any such investment will be brought forward for consideration by the Executive.
- 8.6 The management of the Council's treasury activity considers opportunities that both give the Council the greatest flexibility in the short term and medium term and recognise the benefit derived from investments over the life of the asset.
- 8.7 During 2020/21, the Council secured short term borrowing at very low rates as it was anticipated that the government would remove the additional 1% charge applied to PWLB interest rates. In November 2020 the 1% was removed subject to local authorities providing details of borrowing plans and assurances that they did not include proposals to acquire

commercial investments for yield. Since January 2021 the Council has returned to taking long term PWLB borrowing to match the long term nature of the majority of the Investment Programme.

- 8.8 Whilst there is a short term benefit of the lower short term rates, this is at the risk of long term rates rising over time. Currently long term borrowing rates are above those assumed in setting the 2021/22 interest estimates, however they remain historically very low and so as far as possible short term borrowing will be converted to long term as the loans mature, in order to provide long term certainty. As the lower cost short term loans will be in place for a proportion of 2021/22 there will be a saving against budget which will mitigate any costs through increasing long term rates. The position will be reported in the Green Book each month.

9.0 Reserves

- 9.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy report agreed by the Council at its meeting on 8th April 2021 identified available revenue reserves of £24.946 which were all utilised by the end of 2024/25.
- 9.2 As set out in the 2020/21 budget process, the Council applied for exceptional support from the government for revenue losses as a result of the pandemic. The support requested was a capitalisation direction allowing the flexibility to meet unfunded commercial and income losses in 2020/21 and 2021/22 through capital resources. This would spread the cost of the 'once in a generation' global social and economic event over a longer period, protecting revenue reserves and allowing time for income to recover.
- 9.3 The exceptional support process has been completed and the Council is awaiting the government's response. Only a very small number of local authorities have been granted flexibility, and where they have there has been an immediate need for support. Woking has sufficient reserves to cover forecast losses through the MTFS, the request for support was to reduce the need to make immediate service related decisions while the future economic position remained so uncertain. It is prudent to assume that the support will not be forthcoming and that losses will need to be managed using existing resources.
- 9.4 Part of the review of financial proposals during the 2021 MTFS process will be to consider any flexibilities available to the Council which could be used to achieve the same protection of reserves as would have been secured through the capitalisation directive. This will include review of capital financing, funding of the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) which sets aside resources for the repayment of debt, and the use of capital receipt flexibilities to fund transformation programmes.
- 9.5 The search for further savings highlighted in this report would reduce the demand from the General Fund for use of reserves over the period so that a balance is available at the end of this period that is sufficient to meet the requirement of a budget robustness assessment and provide some provision for risks and an ability to invest into future priority investment programmes.
- 9.6 This provision, highlighted below, is circa £10m which will be reviewed as part of this MTFS process.

| | |
|--|-------|
| General Fund Balance (set at 4% of Gross budget) | £4.8m |
| Priority Outcomes and Transformation | £3.2m |
| Finance and Service Risk | £2.0m |

10.0 Lobbying

- 10.1 We will work with the County Council and other Surrey District and Boroughs to lobby, for the urgent funding the sector, the South East region and Woking Borough Council needs in the coming financial period to make our services sustainable in the long term.
- 10.2 We will use our membership of political and officer networks to be a powerful voice for the role of District and Borough Councils.

11.0 Next Steps

- 11.1 Areas of search will be developed and costed over the summer aligned to the Council's Priority Outcomes. It will form the basis of our future lobbying work and discussions with residents, businesses and partners about what we can realistically provide and how we can help to create resilience in places where the Council can no longer step in.
- 11.2 More detailed plans will be considered by Executive and Finance Task Group throughout the autumn in the lead up to our budget setting meeting in February 2022.

12.0 Corporate Plan

- 12.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy report provides the planning approach to aligning resources to the priority outcomes within the Corporate Plan.

13.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 13.1 The financial and risk implications are detailed within the report.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 13.2 No specific Human Resource or Training and Development implications.
- 13.3 There are no equalities implications.

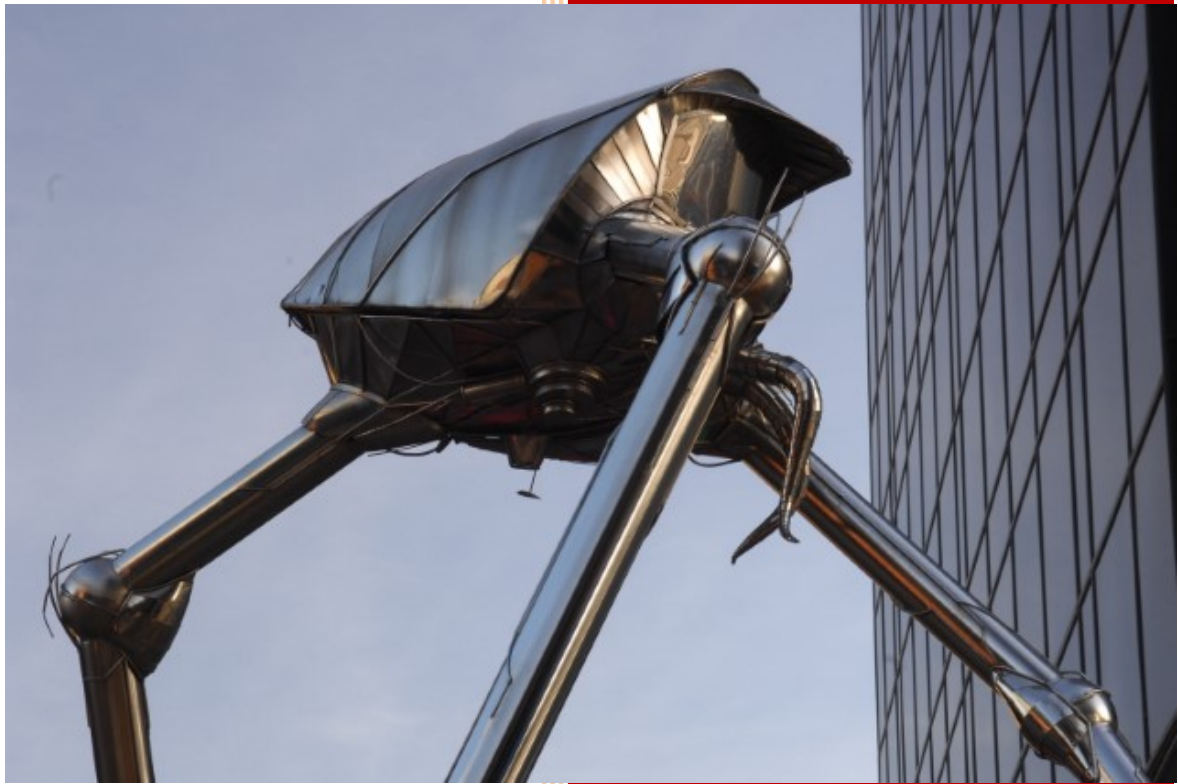
Legal

- 13.4 Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 places a general duty on local authorities to make arrangements for 'the proper administration of their financial affairs'. The Local Government Act 2003 places a duty on the Council's Chief Finance Officer to advise on the robustness of the proposed budget and the adequacy of reserves. The Medium Term Financial Strategy is a policy framework document that is required by law to be adopted by Council. The Medium Term Financial Strategy report was presented to the Executive at its meeting on 25th March 2021 and Council on 8th April 2021. This report is part of the Council's integrated service and financial planning cycle. The report sets out the context and provides an overview of the latest position in preparation for more detailed planning for 2022/23 and beyond.
- 13.5 Under the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 the responsibility for approving any plan or strategy for the control of local authority borrowing, investment or Capital Strategy or for determining the minimum revenue provision is a decision of the full Council. The function of the Executive is to prepare and propose the relevant strategy to the Council. This document provides a comprehensive update on the Council's current position and shall inform future strategy.

REPORT ENDS

2021

Appendix 1: Picture of Woking



Woking Borough Council

7/15/2021

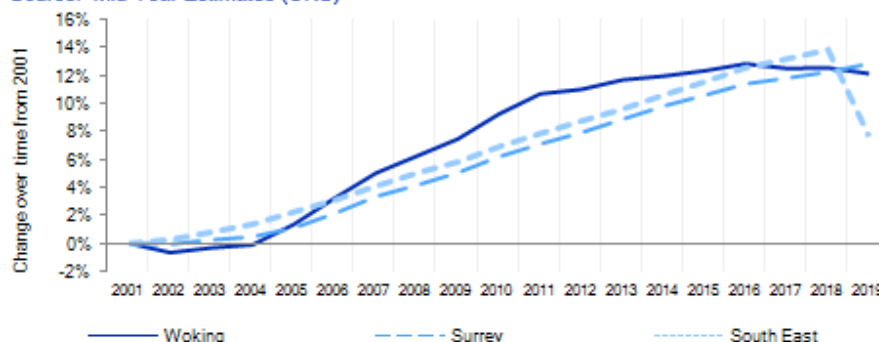
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1.0 A picture of Woking

Woking is one of 11 districts and boroughs in the county of Surrey¹. It has a population of 100,793 across ten wards, which has plateaued in recent years following an above average increase from 2006 – 2015. Of the total population, 50.0% are male and 50.0% are female.

Figure: % change in total population from 2001-2019
Source: Mid-Year Estimates (ONS)



Woking has a slightly younger population profile than both England and the South East region. Of the Woking population, 21.6% are aged 0 to 15 (South East: 19.2%, England: 19.2%), 61.1% are aged 16 to 64 (South East: 61.3%, England 62.4%) and 17.3% are aged 65 and over (South East: 19.5%, England: 18.4%).

However, in common with the rest of the country, Woking has an ageing population and the over 65 population is expected to increase by 3,900, more than 20%, in the next ten years.

Woking is the most ethnically diverse borough in Surrey, with a large Pakistani community (5.7% - the highest proportion in Surrey). In 2011, 83.6% of Woking's population identified themselves as white, 11.6% as Asian or Asian British, 1.4% as black or black British, 2.4% as mixed and 1.1% as other ethnic group.

Woking has the biggest Syrian Refugee Resettlement programme in the South East region. 50 Syrian families have been resettled in Woking over the last five years through the Home Office Vulnerable Person's Relocation Scheme. The council provides housing and intensive support for resettlement including health needs, benefits, employment, language training and social integration.

In March 2021 it was announced that Woking was top of the Lambert Smith Hampton UK Vitality Index 2021² which assesses locations outside London to identify the best places to live, work and do business, in addition to those with the highest growth potential. The index incorporates a range of indicators including economy, business, health outcomes and the environment. Woking had particularly strong performance in the pillars of:

- Economy and Business (10th) - inclusive of a top score for wage growth and commercial property investment, and
- Health and Environment (2nd) – Low levels of cardiovascular mortality and high score for life satisfaction and recycling

Other things to note in the index that are relevant to Woking are:

- Strong performance of medium sized centres related to their ability to offer more to their residents in certain key respects, including education, health outcomes and life satisfaction.
- Strong performance of the South of England making up 8 of the top 10 places

Further to the UK Vitality Index the Legatum Institute produced a 2021 Prosperity Index. The Legatum Institute is a London based think tank focussing on the pathways from poverty to prosperity and the transformation of society

¹ Throughout this document 'Woking' is used to refer to the borough of Woking (as opposed to the town of Woking).

² <https://www.lsh.co.uk/explore/research-and-views/research/2021/feb/vitality-index-2021>

The prosperity index tracks prosperity across all 379 Local Authorities in the UK and allows the assessment of development, growth and extent of prosperity across all areas of the UK.

For 2021, Woking is ranked 5th of all 379 Local Authorities using 3 high level domains of Inclusive Societies; Open Economics and Empowered People to make this assessment. Woking is ranked particularly strongly in the Empowered People domain which covers Living Conditions; Health; Education and Natural Environment.

Other things to note in the Index that are relevant to Woking are:

- Strong overall correlation with the assessments in both the Lambert Smith Hampton Vitality Index and the Legatum Institute Prosperity Index
- Strong overall assessment of the South East region and the County of Surrey with 10 of the 12 Surrey District and Boroughs in the top 20 local authorities

Woking has also scored highly in other rankings, earning a spot among the happiest places in the UK, according to the Office for National Statistics, while the most recent Halifax Quality of Life Survey named Woking among the 20 best places to live in Britain.

2.0 People: A Healthy, Inclusive and Engaged Community

2.1 The health of Woking

The health of people in Woking is generally better than the English average. The life expectancy for both men and women is higher than the average for England – in Woking, life expectancy at birth for males is 82.7 years (compared to 80.8 for the South East region and 79.8 for England) and for females is 84.9 years (compared to 84.3 for the South East region and 83.4 for England).

However, there are health inequalities – differences between the health status of different groups of people – in Woking. In the most deprived areas of Woking, life expectancy is 5.7 years lower for men and 4.6 years lower for women than in the least deprived areas. This is, however, less pronounced than in the South East region generally (7.9 and 6.0 years respectively) and England as a whole (9.5 and 7.5 years respectively).

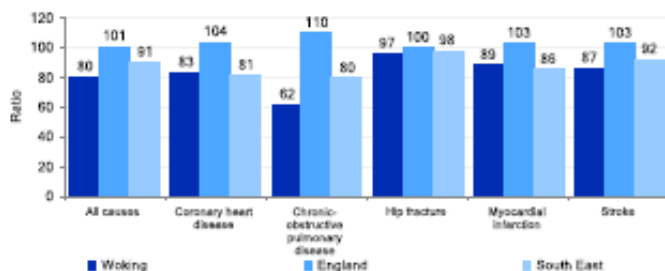
The Covid-19 pandemic has brought health inequalities into sharp focus. A Public Health England report³ published in June 2020 found that the impact of Covid-19 has replicated existing health inequalities, and in some cases has increased them. Nationally, the mortality rates from Covid-19 in the most deprived areas were more than double those in the least deprived areas for both males and females. This is greater than the inequality seen in mortality rates in previous years.

Woking performs well for most other measures of physical health - the infant mortality rate of 3.7 is in line with the South East region (3.7) and lower than England (3.9) and the under 75 mortality rate from cardiovascular diseases (46.8) is better than the averages for the South East region (57.1) and England (70.4), as is the under 75 mortality rate from cancer (110.6 in Woking compared to 121.6 in South East region and 129.2 in England). As the chart below shows, Woking had a lower emergency admission rate to hospital than other areas in England and the South East from 2013 – 2018.

Figure: Emergency hospital admissions: Standardised ratio (select causes)

Source: Hospital Episode Statistics, Information Centre for Health and Social Care, Office for National Statistics (2013/14 – 2017/18)

If an area is above 100, there is a higher proportion of admissions than had been expected. If it's below 100, there is a lower proportion of admissions than expected.



However, the estimated prevalence of diabetes in Woking is 5.7%, higher than the Surrey average of 5.4% and broadly in line with the national average of 6.8%. As highlighted in the Government's White Paper **Working Together To Improve Health and Social Care For All** published in February 2021, diabetes is on the rise. The rate of diabetes in England is expected to increase by more than 15% by 2030.

There are over 14 million disabled people in the UK. Into this group fall 19% of working age adults, 44% of pensioners and 8% of children. Woking is the district/borough in Surrey with the highest percentage of adults claiming Disability Living Allowance (1.7% compared to 1.5% Surrey average). The top three wards for disability benefit claims are Hoe Valley, Goldsworth Park and Knaphill. The council's Homelink service has seen an increase in the number of clients with mobility issues as a result of the pandemic.

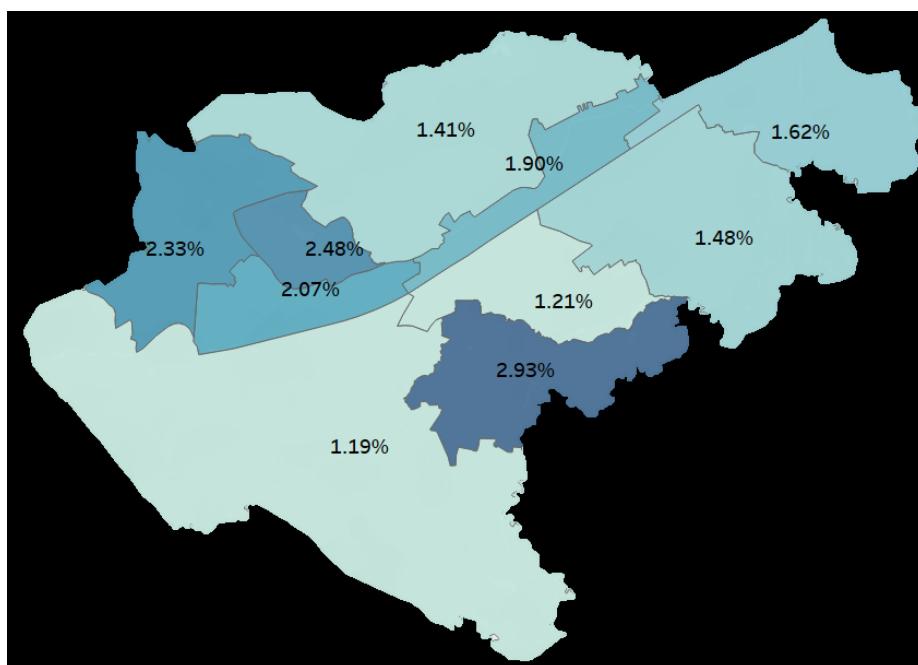


Figure 2: Shows proportion of people who are disabled and receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
Source: Department for Work and Pensions – February 2021

Woking has the second highest rate in Surrey for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Year R (aged 4-5 years) at 79.1 per 1,000 compared to the Surrey average of 55.3. At Year 6 (aged 10-11 years) the rate in Woking of 108.1 is slightly below the Surrey average of 109.6.

Surrey County Council's Graduated Response⁴, also known as 'SEND Support', provides an approach for early identification and intervention to support children who experience barriers in making progress. This 'staged' approach follows a four-part cycle - assess, plan, do and review – and sets out how services in Surrey work together with parents/carers, schools and settings to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

In terms of mental health, the rate for self-harm related hospital admissions in Woking is 106.4 (representing 100 admissions per year), lower than the average for both the South East region (199.7) and England (193.4). Similarly, Woking's suicide rate of 8.0 per 100,000 people is lower than that of the South East region (9.6) and England (10.1). Males account for around 75% of suicide deaths, with 45-60 being the highest risk age group. The Surrey Suicide Prevention Strategy 2019-22 aims to reduce levels of suicide by 10% by 2021.

Mental health problems are distributed according to a gradient of economic disadvantage i.e. the poorer and more disadvantaged are more likely to be affected by a mental illness.

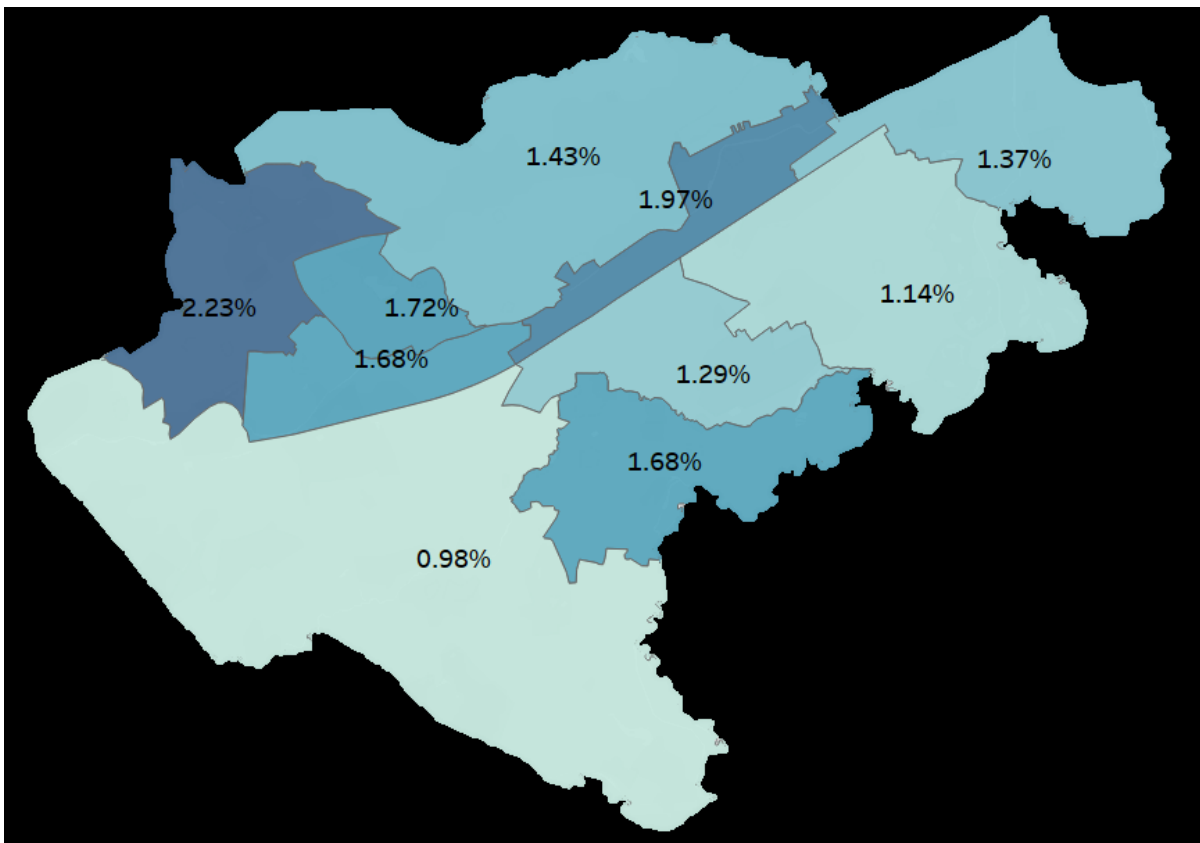
Nationally, one in six adults experiences a common mental health problem such as anxiety or depression. The estimated prevalence of common mental disorders in Woking is lower compared to the South East region and England for both the population aged 16 and over (England: 16.9%, South East region: 14.8%, Woking: 13.1%) and the population aged 65 and over (England: 10.2%, South East region: 9.2%, Woking: 7.9%).

However, Woking has a slightly higher percentage of adults claiming incapacity benefit for mental health issues (1.6% of all incapacity benefit claimants) compared to the rest of Surrey (1.5%), ranking joint second out of the 11 borough and districts in Surrey. It should be noted that this is lower than the England average of 2.3% and no Woking wards fall above this national average. The top three wards for mental health incapacity benefit are Knaphill⁵ (2.2%), Canalside (2.0%) and Goldsworth Park (1.7%), as show in the map below.

Figure 3: Claimants of Incapacity Benefit who are claiming due to mental health related conditions Source: Department for Work and Pensions – May 2020

⁴ <https://www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk/kb5/surrey/localoffer/site.page?id=6soPrqlr3vA>

⁵ Brookwood Asylum in Knaphill was the leading mental hospital in West Surrey until its closure in 1994. Many former residents chose to stay in the area.



The trend for those claiming Incapacity Benefit due to mental health has remained largely flat across the last 10 years.

Mental health has been identified as a particular issue in young people. In 2020, Redeeming Our Communities undertook a survey of more than 150 young people in Woking. When asked what the biggest issue was in Woking, the main response was mental health, followed by a lack of things to do / being bored and bullying in school, online and through phone and text messages. During the past year, 73% of young people surveyed had experienced anxiety, 40% had felt isolation, 37% had periods of sustained mental health illness and depression, 24% had suffered from self-harm, and 8% said their long-term mental health had been affected by a disability.

The lockdowns as a result of the pandemic have had a significant impact on mental health and social isolation. The UCL COVID-19 Social Study published in February 2021 found that anxiety and depression levels are consistently higher than pre-pandemic averages. The ONS report **Coronavirus and the Social Impacts on Great Britain**, published in November 2020, found that restrictions on socialising have had an impact on people's wellbeing and mental health with nearly half of adults (49%) reporting boredom, loneliness, anxiety or stress arising due to the pandemic. In November 2020 Surrey County Council published a Covid-19 Community Impact Assessment⁶ which found that 58% of Woking residents were concerned about their mental health and wellbeing for the following six months. This figure is 11% higher than the Surrey average and the highest of the districts and boroughs in Surrey.

A social prescribing survey of 29 link workers and wellbeing advisers across Surrey in January 2021 found that the most common issues being experienced by clients were mental health and emotional support, and social interaction or loneliness. An ONS survey⁷ between October 2020 and February 2021 found that 6.58% of people in Woking often or always felt lonely, compared to 6.17% in Surrey and 7.26% in England.

⁶ <https://www.surreyi.gov.uk/covid-impacts/>

⁷

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/lonelinessratesandwellbeingindicatorsbylocalauthority>

The mental health impact of the pandemic on children and young people has been widely reported. In July 2020 NHS Digital undertook a survey⁸ of the mental health of children and young people across England, a follow-up to a 2017 survey. This latest survey found that rates of probable mental disorder in children aged 5 - 16 years have increased from one in nine (10.8%) in 2017 to one in six (16.0%) in 2020. The likelihood of a probable mental disorder increased with age, and there was a noticeable difference in gender for the older age group (17 - 22 years); 27.2% of young women and 13.3% of young men were identified as having a probable mental disorder in 2020.

Dementia is now the leading cause of death in the UK. 1.29% of the Woking population (which equates to 1,370 people)⁹ is living with dementia. This is broadly in line with the UK average of 1.29%. The number of people with dementia is predicted to rise by up to 35% by 2025 and 146% by 2050.

2.2 Clinical care

Physical and mental health and care services are provided by a range of organisations including NHS providers, Surrey County Council and the voluntary and community sector.

Although the Council has limited influence over the quality of clinical care, it can and does influence access to clinical care, for example through the provision of space for health services in the local community and ensuring transport provides easy access to health services.

- In November 2020 outpatient physiotherapy services were relocated from Ashford and St Peter's Hospital to five new physio rooms at Woking Leisure Centre to improve access, provide the opportunity to link recovery programmes with exercise at the gym and encourage local residents to access facilities and activities they may never have done before.

In addition, the stigma in relation to mental health issues can prevent people from seeking help and the Council can play a role in reducing this.

- In 2019, Woking was recognised by the Alzheimer's Society as the first Dementia Friendly Community in Surrey.

2.3 Smoking

The smoking rate in Woking has more than halved in the last ten years. 7.6% of adults in Woking smoke, this is lower than both the South East region (12.2%) and England (13.9%). Smoking prevalence in pregnant women is also lower (7.4%) than both the South East region (9.7%) and England (10.4%).

2.4 Diet

60.2% of adults in Woking are classified as overweight or obese compared to 62.3% in England and 57.6% in the South East region. 8.5% of adults (8,500 people) in Woking are registered by their GP with obesity as a health condition. Again, although this is lower than the national average of 9.8%, it is higher than the Surrey rate of 6% and Woking ranks highest of the 11 boroughs and districts in Surrey.

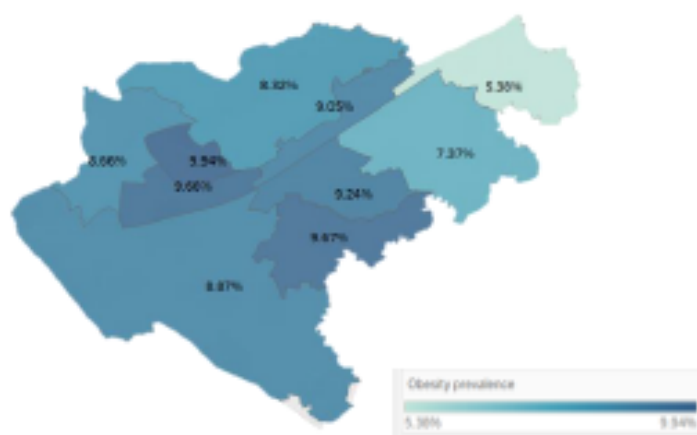
Obesity is the single greatest risk factor for developing Type 2 diabetes and adults who are overweight or living with obesity are at an increased risk of serious Covid-19 complications and death.

The map below shows that though prevalence of obesity is highest in the centre of the borough it is largely similar throughout.

⁸ <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2020-wave-1-follow-up>

⁹ https://app.polimapper.co.uk/?dataSetKey=38d03a57d2f948c8b577839a1cf16543#=&con_over=Woking

Figure: Shows the estimated percentage of Obesity prevalence.
Source: GP registers in 2017/18, NHS Digital

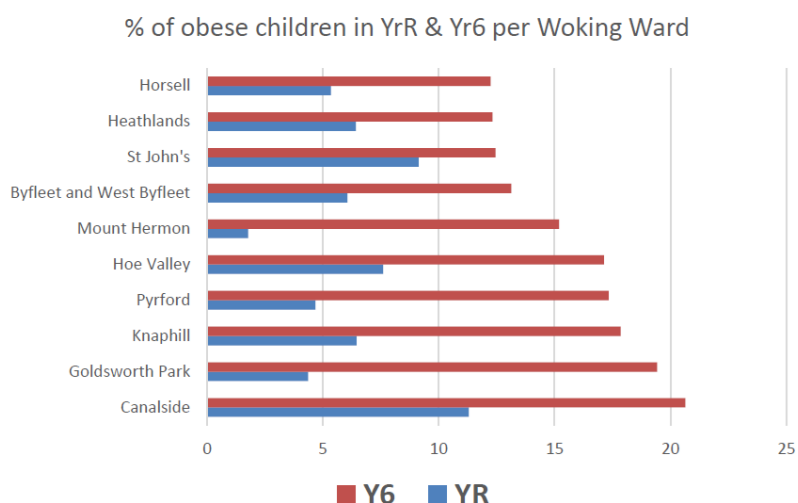


Goldsworth Park has the greatest obesity prevalence at 9.9%, followed by Hoe Valley and St. John's (both at 9.6%). These three wards are the highest ranked wards in Surrey. Six of the top ten wards in Surrey for obesity prevalence are in Woking. All Woking wards apart from Byfleet and West Byfleet are above the Surrey average.

Childhood obesity statistics present a similar picture. This is a particular concern as children who are overweight or living with obesity are much more likely to become adults who are overweight or living with obesity.

Childhood obesity rates in Year R (ages 4-5) and Year 6 (ages 10-11) in Woking are 6.4% and 15.9% respectively, lower than the averages for England (9.6% and 20% respectively) but higher than the Surrey averages (6.2% and 14% respectively).

Per Ward, the breakdown is as follows:



Canalside has the highest percentage of obesity in both Year R (11.2%) and Year 6 (20.6% - one in five children of this age) and is above the national average for both age groups.

2.5 Exercise

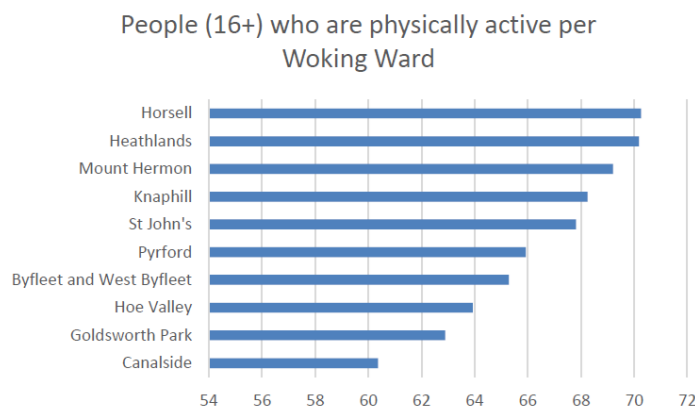
Just behind smoking, high blood pressure and obesity, the fourth biggest cause of disease in our population is lack of physical activity. As well as preventing physical ill health, exercise can also have a positive impact on mental wellbeing. In a recent survey undertaken by Active Surrey c. 75% of

Woking residents surveyed reported that sport and exercise made them most happy and c. 70% reported that they do sport or exercise to manage their worries.

28.0% of people (aged 16+) in Woking are classed as inactive which means they do less than 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a week. This compares to 23.2% in Surrey and 27.1% in England¹⁰ and Woking is the most inactive district or borough in Surrey. The figure for Woking has significantly increased over the past six months from 24.2%. 61.6% of people in Woking are classed as physically active, as they do at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week (Surrey: 65.4%, England: 61.4%).

This most recent data is not yet available at a ward level, but the breakdown by ward for the May 2019/20 data is as follows:

The breakdown by ward is as follows:



Canalside has the lowest percentage of physically active people (16+) at 63.5% and has the third highest percentage of inactive adults of all the wards in Surrey.

The most recent physical activity data¹¹ for children and young people at a borough level is from 2017/18 which showed that almost a third (28.8%) of children did less than 30 minutes of activity each day. This was the third lowest compared to other Surrey boroughs and districts and lower than the Surrey average (30.9%).

Sport England has reported on the impact of the pandemic on activity levels. The proportion of the adult population classed as inactive increased by 7.4% during the first few weeks of full lockdown between mid-March and mid-May 2020¹². Sport England also found that the proportion of children and young people reporting they were active during mid-May to late-July 2020 fell by 2.3% compared to the same period 12 months earlier.¹³ Sporting activities saw a large decrease in the numbers taking part, however, significant increases in walking, cycling and fitness activities limited the negative impact on overall activity levels.

The council recognises the importance of physical activity, as demonstrated by its endorsement of the Physical Activity Strategy for Surrey in 2019. The council provides leisure facilities (operated by Freedom Leisure) at Woking Leisure Centre, Woking Sportsbox and Pool in the Park. In 2019/20 Freedom Leisure provided almost 90,000 swimming lessons as part of a mixed programme of leisure, sport, recreation and competition activities, catering to a variety of groups and needs. The programme includes learning disability swimming lessons, walking football, dementia friendly swimming sessions,

¹⁰ Source: <https://activelives.sportengland.org/Home/AdultData>

¹¹ Source: https://www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/data/active-lives/active-lives-data-tables?section=children_and_young_people_surveys

¹² https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-10/Active%20Lives%20Adult%20May%202019-20%20Coronavirus%20Report.pdf?2L6TBVV5UvCGXb_VxZcWHcfFX0_wRaI7

¹³ [https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-01/Active%20Lives%20Children%20Survey%20Academic%20Year%2019-20%20Coronavirus%20report.pdf?2yHCzeG_iDUKk4mGQ4mLiQcgThJPowerPoint Presentation \(sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-01/Active%20Lives%20Children%20Survey%20Academic%20Year%2019-20%20Coronavirus%20report.pdf?2yHCzeG_iDUKk4mGQ4mLiQcgThJPowerPoint Presentation (sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com))

ladies football, ladies youth boxing and disability badminton courses. The facilities offer tiered pricing on both a pay as you go and monthly/annual basis, including reduced rates for those in full time education, receiving means tested benefits, disabled users and carers.

The council also operates a large number of sports pitches (football, cricket and rugby) and pavilions over 18 local greenspaces. In addition, there are a number of private providers running facilities across the borough.

The council has a Sports Development Officer who liaises with the wide range of sports clubs (over 75 in total) to ensure best use is made of the available facilities. Some clubs boast over 500 members ranging from elite participants to grassroots level. The council has a range of tennis courts and a community membership package at the newly refurbished courts in Woking Park which is hugely popular (775 active members and 77% court utilisation in 2020) and very accessible at £39 a year for up to six hours of tennis a week. The council also participates in annual events such as Surrey Youth Games and hosts the Woking Sports Awards to encourage more residents to be active.

Physical activity can be a form of travel such as walking or cycling everyday journeys. In England, 56% of car journeys are under five miles¹⁴ and transport accounts for a third (34%) of all carbon dioxide emissions¹⁵, the majority arising from road travel. Increasing active travel (walking and cycling) can therefore improve health through both reduced emissions and increased exercise as well as having a positive climate impact.

In 2008, Woking was awarded cycle demonstration town status and received £1.8m in government funding to develop a three-year infrastructure enhancement programme. Woking Borough Council delivered the Cycle Woking programme in partnership with Surrey County Council to help increase take up of walking and cycling, particularly for shorter journeys within the borough.

Just over 26km of new off-road cycle routes were constructed, 13km of which run along the Basingstoke Canal. The enhanced cycle network provided a 60% increase in dedicated cycle facilities and transformed the old fragmented network by improving connectivity to key places including the town centre and railway station.

The network was named the 'Planet Trails' giving a nod to local connections with HG Wells and the War of the Worlds, which was written and based in Woking.

Other infrastructure improvements have included new and improved signalised cycle crossings which allow safer access across busy roads, better signage and over a thousand new cycle parking spaces, including a dedicated secure Cycle Hub at Woking Railway Station. Since the improvements, Woking Town Centre has played host to Britain's leading televised cycle race, the Tour Series, five times.

In August 2020, a [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#) (LCWIP) for Woking was published, one of the first in the UK. Development of the plan was funded by the Department of Transport, working with Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council. This plan identifies cycling and walking infrastructure improvements for future investment to help further increase trips made on foot or by bicycle.

2.6 Alcohol use

Alcohol misuse is the biggest risk factor for death, ill health and disability among 15-49 year olds in the UK, and the fifth biggest risk factor across all ages. The rate for alcohol-related harm hospital

¹⁴

Department for Transport, Walking & cycling statistics (2018). [https:// assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674503/walking-and-cycling-statistics-england-2016.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674503/walking-and-cycling-statistics-england-2016.pdf)

¹⁵

2019 UK greenhouse gas emissions, provisional figures https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875485/2019_UK_greenhouse_gas_emissions_provisional_figures_statistical_release.pdf

admissions in Woking is 506 per 100,000, representing 479 admissions per year. The rate is lower than the averages for both the South East region (526) and England (664).

The rate for alcohol-specific hospital admissions among those under 18 in Woking is 21 per 100,000, representing 15 admissions per year. Again, this is lower than both the South East region (31.7) and England (31.6) rates.

The i-access drug and alcohol service, provided by Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, offers specialist advice, support and treatment to people in Surrey who want help with their drug and/or alcohol use. The council's Family Services team works in partnership with treatment providers where alcohol misuse is an issue for a family being supported and the Women's Support Centre actively supports women with substance misuse issues (including alcohol).

2.7 Sexual health

The rate of new sexually transmitted infections in Woking (529 per 100,000) is lower than the averages for the South East region (714) and England (900).

The Sexual Health Clinic at Woking Community Hospital is commissioned by Public Health and provides free confidential sexual health services, including contraception and genito-urinary medicine (GUM) screening, treatment and follow-up.

2.8 Education

A key measure of educational attainment is the 'average 8 attainment score'¹⁶. This is a measure of the average attainment of pupils in up to eight qualifications of GCSE and equivalent. Woking has an average 8 attainment score of 50.2, which is broadly in line with the Surrey average (50.3) and above England's (46.9). In addition, 81.9% of those aged 16-64 in Woking are qualified to Level 2 or higher, which is greater than the average for the South East (79.2%).

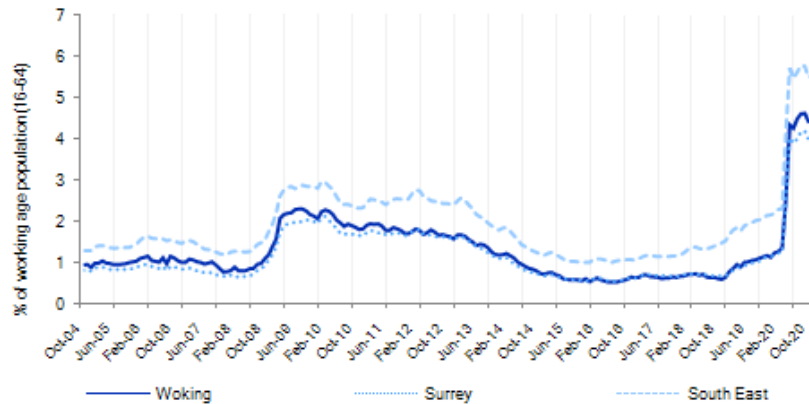
Surrey County Council is responsible for education. There are more than 30 primary schools in Woking, including five independent schools and two special schools (Freemantles, a school for children and young people with complex social communication needs, and Knowl Hill, a school for children with dyslexia and associated learning needs). There are ten secondary schools in Woking, including two independent schools and three special schools (Freemantles, Knowl Hill and Park School). There are four further education institutions in Woking for students aged 16 to 18 – Woking College, St John the Baptist Catholic Comprehensive School, Freemantles School and Hoe Valley School. All these institutions are rated outstanding by Ofsted apart from Woking College which is rated good.

2.9 Employment

In Woking, 51% of workers are in managerial, professional and technical occupations which is 10% above the average for the UK. The rate of employment (for those aged 16-64) is better in Woking (78.9%) than the England average (76.2%) but lower than the South East average (79.6%). However, this data is from 2019/20 and the economic impacts of the pandemic are now starting to be felt.

The chart below shows the month on month changes in the percentage of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or Universal Credit (UC) across Woking and comparator areas. A clear and large spike can be seen in spring 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak.

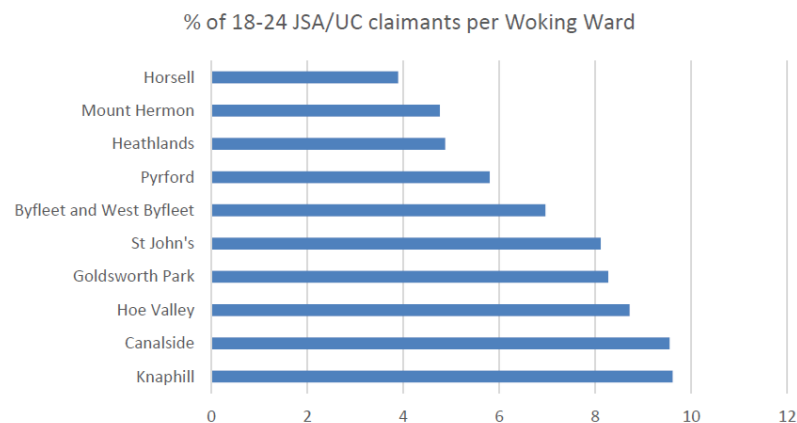
Figure: Unemployment benefit (Jobseekers Allowance/Universal Credit) claimants
Source: Department for Work and Pensions



In summer 2020 Surrey County Council undertook analysis of furlough data to identify at risk employees and Woking ranked seventh (out of eleven districts and boroughs) in Surrey for quantity of at risk employees. This analysis also looked at unemployment rates and identified that communities with the highest existing unemployment may also be hit hardest by future redundancies. Canalside and Hoe Valley appeared in the top two for both indicators.

Youth unemployment is a particular concern. 7.7% of 18-24 year olds in Woking claimed JSA or UC in March 2021 (South East: 7.9%, Great Britain: 9.1%)¹⁷. The number of claimants in this category in Woking has more than tripled in the year since March 2020.

Per Ward, the breakdown is as follows:



Hoe Valley (9.7%) and St Johns (9.2%) have the highest figures which are above the national (9.2%), countywide (6.1%) and local average (7.9%). All Woking wards apart from Horsell are above the Surrey average.

Youth unemployment has also been significantly impacted by the pandemic. In December 2020 there were 882 Woking residents aged 18-24 in receipt of UC. Prior to the pandemic there were approximately 250 recipients at any one time.

The council's [Economic Development Strategy](#) 2017-2022 has five themes:

- Economic Dynamism;
- Economic Strength;
- People Skills and Workforce;
- Transport and Infrastructure; and
- Place Making.

The priorities for action in the strategy include several designed to positively affect employment (and income) in Woking, including encouraging local recruitment.

The council has recently commissioned Surrey Care Trust to deliver a Youth Hub project to support 18-24 year olds in receipt of UC. This project launched in April 2021 based in Moorcroft Centre for the Community (which is in Westfield, Hoe Valley ward which has the highest level of UC/JSA claimants aged 18-24 in Woking) and also utilising centres in Byfleet and Knaphill. The project provides targeted support to help young people in Woking into employment through holistic support, links to business opportunities and the [Kickstart Scheme](#). In addition, within the community campus as part of the Sheerwater development (see case study on page [57]), the council will seek to incorporate support for young people in training and skills development.

2.10 Family and social support

Family and social support are key determinants of health. They are particularly important for families (including single parent families) and people at risk of social isolation. There are over 14,000 single person households in Woking¹⁸ and this is projected to continue increasing. There are over 1,800 lone parents with dependent families in Woking.

Woking's planning strategy includes community facilities to support community cohesion and prevent isolation. The council seeks developer contributions to enable the provision of facilities or allocates land to enable the building of facilities.

The council also provides the following family and social support:

- Family Centres and Family Support Programme - these teams work with families and coordinate support across a range of areas including parenting, employment, education, physical and mental health, finances, healthy relationships, crime and anti-social behaviour. In the year to 9 March 2021, Family Centres received 168 referrals and supported a total of 297 children up to the age of 11. The main reasons for referrals were domestic abuse (32%), SEND (27%), and adult mental health including substance misuse (24%);
- Targeted youth work – the council runs targeted support jointly with Surrey County Council for; girls at risk of child exploitation, LGBT+ young people, children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and young carers and looked after children. Approximately 50 young people are currently accessing services including mental health and wellbeing support, face-to-face sessions with youth workers, bereavement support, support with homework and Duke of Edinburgh Award programmes. Following a Surrey-wide consultation, the two Youth Centres in Woking (Sheerwater and WYAC) will be leased to local voluntary organisations during 2021. The council is also using feedback from looked after children and care leavers to shape the services available in the Centres for the Community;
- Centres for the Community - four centres across the borough (Moorcroft, Parkview, St Mary's and The Vyne) provide meals and activities for older and vulnerable residents. The centres are also used by health visitors for baby clinics and parenting support and for hairdressing, chiropody, reflexology and assisted bathing services. Before the pandemic the centres received over 20,000 visits each month and in 2019/20 more than 13,000 meals were provided. The majority of services at these centres have been closed during the most recent lockdown but the council has plans to reopen them in line with government guidance;
- Volunteer management and charity support – the council supports volunteers to register for placements and charities to recruit volunteers. There are currently 1,000 volunteers registered and seeking placements. Many of these charities support families and people who are socially isolated, and volunteering can help volunteers to stay physically and mentally active while also reducing their own social isolation. Volunteer Woking also provides a range of other services

including funding support, training, governance advice and information and knowledge sharing, to more than 450 charities and community groups in Woking;

- Social Prescribing– this service links people with social, emotional and practical needs to a range of local non-medical support provided in the community. This is one of the six components of the comprehensive model of personalised care described in the NHS Long Term Plan, and is designed to help improve an individual's health, wellbeing and resilience. Social prescribing looks at all aspects of the wider determinants of health and recognises that if an individual is able to improve one area of their life, it can have a positive impact on other factors. The team receives referrals from a range of sources including GP surgeries, district nurses, and social care workers. They signpost people to local services and activities, and attend sessions with individuals who do not feel comfortable doing so on their own. The service is being further developed by extending referrers to include the ambulance service, mental health trust and the Job Centre. There has been an increase in referrals from an average of 31 referrals per month in 2019/20 to an average of more than 50 per month in the first ten months of 2020/21 with a noticeable increase in referrals of males living alone (81 referrals from this demographic in 2019/20 increased to 133 in 2020/21 as at 19 March 2021); and
- Arts – Woking has a cinema, two theatres and a drama studio (Ypod). A new small theatre and studio, which will be used by the Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts, is being built as part of the Victoria Place town centre development. The council's Arts Officer liaises with a wide range of community drama, singing, dance and arts groups throughout the borough and sits on the Surrey Arts Partnership Board. Activities including the community choir have been run virtually during the pandemic.

In addition, Surrey County Council runs a number of participation groups for care leavers that are open to Woking residents. 'Care Council' exists for 13-25 year olds who are in care or have left care, 'Care Council Juniors' for 8-13 year olds in care, fostering or under special arrangements and 'Surrey Care Leavers' Forum' for care leavers aged 18+. There are currently approximately 41 care leavers in Woking who are supported by an allocated worker.

Carers provide vital, unpaid support to many people. A carer is anyone (child or adult) who cares, unpaid, for a family member, partner or friend who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support. There are almost 7,000 carers in Woking of which more than 2,000 are over the age of 65, and this figure is likely to be an under representation. Carers are twice as likely to suffer from ill health as non-carers and the council recognises the importance of supporting this group to enable them to continue in their caring roles.

Responding to the Carers UK's State of Caring 2018 survey, 72% of carers said they had suffered mental ill health and 61% said they had suffered physical ill health as a result of caring. 80% of people caring for loved ones said they had felt lonely or socially isolated. In March 2021, Public Health England published a report¹⁹ stating that as there is evidence that carers experience worse health than non-carers, unpaid caring responsibilities should be considered a social determinant of health.

It is estimated that an additional 4.5 million people in the UK have taken on caring responsibilities during the pandemic and it has been widely reported that the pandemic has increased pressure on carers. For example, the Carers Trust found that 40% of young carers and 59% of young adult carers reported worsening mental health since Covid-19. They also reported that 70% of young carers are providing more care during the outbreak - 11% of young carers and 20% of young adult carers reported an increase of 30 hours or more in the amount of time they spend caring per week.²⁰

Woking Council was the first district and borough in Surrey to sign up to the Together for Carers principles in March 2017, and the first to train staff to complete a carer's prescription which helps ensure that carers are provided with all available support. The council also signed up to the Young Carers Pledge in January 2020 to identify and support young carers living in the borough.

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/caring-as-a-social-determinant-of-health-review-of-evidence>

²⁰ <https://carers.org/downloads/what-we-do-section/my-future-by-looking-after-my-family.pdf>

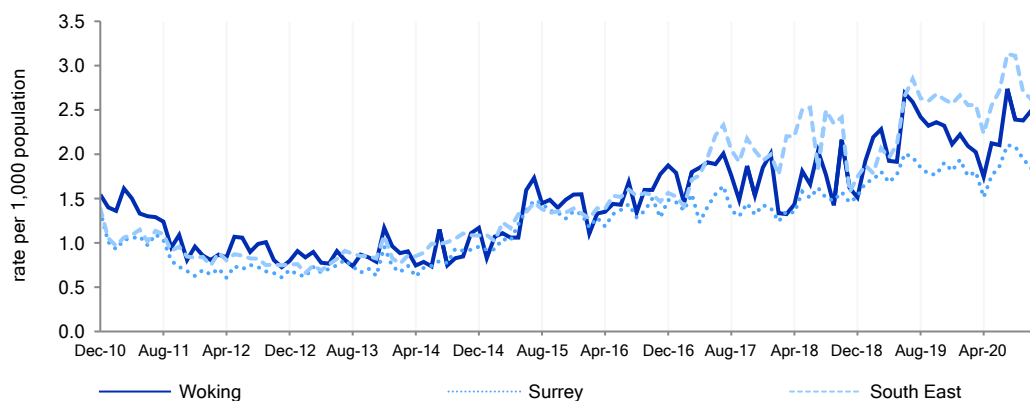
Over 1,400 adult carers in Woking are registered with Action for Carers Surrey, and approximately 1,100 of those are actively engaged, for example by attending social events or support events (currently provided virtually due to the pandemic). Action for Carers also supports over 300 young carers (aged 5-17) and 15 young adult carers (aged 18-24) in Woking. The council runs a Young Carers weekly club at Lakeview Centre for the Community and prior to the pandemic ran a Carers Choir and 'creative lunches' for people with dementia and their carers. In February 2021 Surrey Heartlands launched an end of life care website for carers - [Caring to the end](#). The council is promoting the website, which was co-produced with carers, to its residents.

2.11 Community safety

Overall Woking is a safe place to live. However, the rate of violent crime (hospital admissions for violence) in Woking (34.9) is higher than the rate for the South East region (31.2) and is rising, as shown in the chart below, although it is lower than the England average (44.9).

Figure 5: Violent crime offences

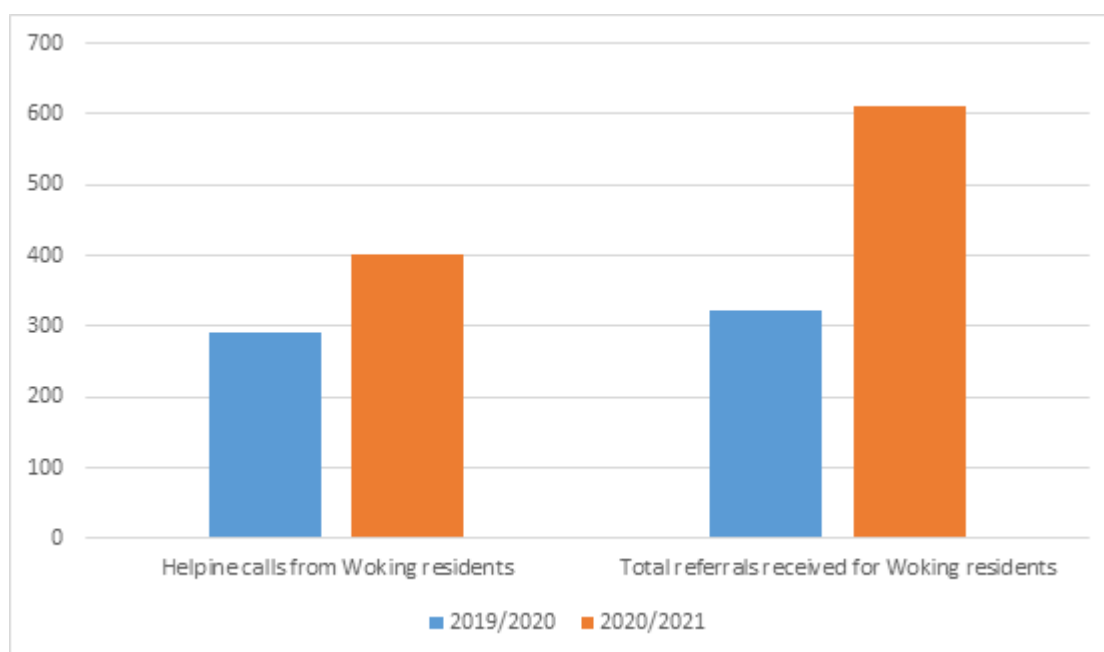
Source: <https://data.police.uk/>



Nationally one in three women and one in six men will experience an abusive relationship in their lifetime. Domestic abuse is considerably underreported but nevertheless there has been a year on year increase in the number of cases reported to Surrey Police now receiving an average of 1,000 reports each month across Surrey. There has been an 89% increase in Woking referrals to Your Sanctuary²¹ in 2020/21 compared to the previous year, in line with the national picture. Your Sanctuary has heard from survivors that the lockdowns due to the pandemic have enabled perpetrators to increase levels of control and abuse (they do not believe that the lockdowns have made previously non-abusive people into perpetrators).

Your Sanctuary Domestic Violence Statistics 2019/20 and 2020/21

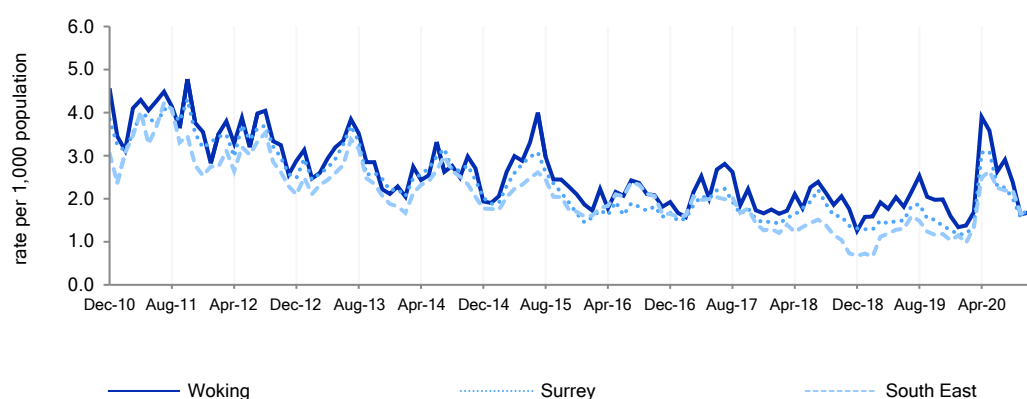
²¹ Your Sanctuary provides specialist support services for survivors of domestic abuse, as well as their concerned families and friends, for further detail see page [54].



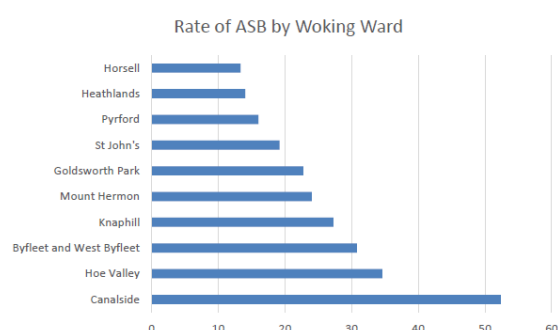
Woking's rate of anti-social behaviour (ASB) (29.3) is higher than the Surrey rate (27.1) but slightly lower than England (29.6). Woking's rate is the fourth highest in Surrey although it has been exhibiting a downward trend since 2010.

Figure 6: Anti-social behaviour offences

Source: <https://data.police.uk/>



Per ward, the breakdown is as follows:



Canalside has a significantly higher incidence of ASB than any other Woking ward, and with a rate of 52.8 it is ranked tenth compared to all wards in Surrey. It should be acknowledged that town centres are commonly the highest-ranking wards for this indicator. However, the Hoe Valley, Byfleet and West Byfleet, Goldsworth Park and Knaphill wards are all higher than the national, countywide and local

rates for this indicator. It should be noted that this national dataset for ASB is based on police data and does not include ASB that has only been reported to the council.

Other types of crime, such as vehicle crime, criminal damage and burglary offences have remained reasonably static.

The Safer Woking Partnership was set up to help reduce crime in the area by promoting crime prevention initiatives and protecting the most vulnerable people in the community. As well as the council it includes representatives from Surrey County Council, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, the NHS, Surrey Police and Kent Surrey and Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company. The [Safer Woking Partnership Plan](#) sets out the priorities, which include ASB. Due to the pandemic, the action plan for 2020/21 was not finalised as many of the planned engagement activities were not possible. The Partnership is in the process of developing its action plan for 2021/22.

[Woking Street Angels](#) are trained volunteers who, for the past ten years, have walked the streets of Woking town centre every Friday and Saturday night, from 10pm till 4am, to help night-time visitors have a safe experience in the town. Typically, they help those who are intoxicated, lonely, sick, vulnerable, troubled or sleeping rough, working with police, door staff, CCTV, the council and medical services. The council has supported Woking Street Angels with grant funding.

[Your Sanctuary](#) provides specialist support services for survivors of domestic abuse, as well as their concerned families and friends, and is a source of advice for local professionals. The council provides an annual grant to Your Sanctuary and has collaborated with Your Sanctuary on campaigns to raise awareness.

2.12 The voluntary sector

Woking's Voluntary Sector includes not for profit independent, voluntary, and community groups. Also organisations formed by local people, and those with a local interest, to improve the quality of life for themselves and/or others in Woking. These include a range of registered charities; voluntary organisations; community groups; faith groups involved in social action; community interest companies, mutual and co-operatives, social enterprises, and citizen-led organisations.

The diversity and wide range of Voluntary Sector organisations in Woking have a highly significant role in helping to improve the quality of life of people who live and work in the borough, particularly vulnerable adults and children. Volunteer Woking supports 477 organisations and currently has over 1350 active volunteers.

Charities in Woking are currently going through uncertainty and change. The loss of income and/or donations resulting from Covid is putting a great deal of pressure on charities within the borough. Charities are now looking to change their service to adapt to the current climate. The Council is looking at ways to help support both charities and clients; we need to make sure they are aware of the different networks who can help and support them, which needs to include partnership working.

Volunteering in Woking has changed over the last 18 months. There has been a fantastic response from people in Woking wishing to volunteer with over 500 people signing up to Volunteer Woking in the first 3 months of lockdown. This does not take into account the five Mutual Aid groups with their volunteers who helped and supported their local community with collecting medication, shopping and providing food. We have seen a change in the age range of people signing up to volunteer with an increase in younger people (24-49) being on furlough or being made redundant wishing to volunteer. We have also seen a change with the older volunteers being a little more reluctant, mainly due to shielding or government guidelines not allowing them to safely volunteer. A lot more graduates are volunteering as they are unable to currently find placements. We need to capture all volunteers - this means keeping them engaged with the Woking community and the different opportunities available to them.

3.0 PLACE: An enterprising, vibrant and sustainable borough

3.1 Environment

The built and natural environment refers to the physical environment. This includes: schools, workplaces, homes, communities, parks and recreation areas, green spaces (visible grass, trees and other vegetation) and blue spaces (visible water). The environment is a key factor which influences the health and wellbeing of local populations. For example, green infrastructure²² can improve health through providing opportunities for physical exercise and boosting mental health by being in nature (termed 'biophilia') and the design of neighbourhoods can influence patterns of travel and social connectivity.

3.2 Green Infrastructure Network

15.9% of Woking is green space²³ which is higher than the averages for both Surrey (6.2%) and England (2.2%). However, public parks and gardens green space coverage is only 0.9% which is broadly in line with the average for England (0.8%) and lower than the Surrey average (1.8%).

Woking Borough's green infrastructure network is made up of a wide range of green assets. These range from landscapes which are statutorily designated or protected to some degree to individual trees and vegetation.

Approximately 60% of the Borough is designated Green Belt and it is largely undeveloped greenfield land. Essentially, the built up area sits within a large island in the centre of a green sea. Although green land and elements are more evident on the outskirts than the central urban core, the main built up areas are not absent of green assets. The River Wey and Basingstoke Canal run through the urban area, injecting green/blue seams through the grey island. There are also pockets of open space, recreation areas, verges, tree lined streets/avenues, private gardens that all contribute to the green infrastructure network and biodiversity in Woking Borough. The following identifies the green assets within the Borough:

Local Nature reserves (LNR), Local Geological Sites: Local nature reserves (LNR) are statutory designations made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, as amended by Schedule 11 of the NERC Act 2006. They are identified for their nature or wildlife value. There are two LNRs in Woking Borough:

- White Rose Lane
- Mayford Meadows

Trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and Trees (no formal protection): There are over 2000 TPOs within the Borough. These comprise of single trees and groups of trees. They are afforded protection under the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012 for their amenity value to the surrounding area.

There are many trees and hedges in the Borough that do not have any formal protection. However local policies seek to protect any trees and hedgerows of significant amenity or environmental value.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): There are six Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) all or part of which are found within the Borough:

- Horsell Common (status: favourable/recovering condition)
- Ash to Brookwood Heaths (favourable/recovering)
- Smarts and Prey Heaths (recovering)
- Colony Bog & Bagshot Heaths (favourable/recovering)
- Basingstoke Canal (unfavourable/no change)
- Smart's and Prey Heaths (unfavourable/recovering), and

²² Green infrastructure includes parks, green spaces, playing fields, woodlands, street trees, allotments, private gardens, green roofs and walls, sustainable drainage systems and soils. It also includes rivers, streams, canals and other water bodies, sometimes called 'blue infrastructure'.

²³ Ordnance Survey data which includes allotments or community growing spaces, bowling greens, cemeteries, religious grounds, golf courses, other sports facilities, play spaces, playing fields, public parks or gardens and tennis courts.

- Whitmoor Common (largely unfavourable/recovering) (fragment only - Whitmoor Common is located in Guildford Borough but adjoins the Woking Borough boundary).

These are sites of national importance for wildlife and/or geology (some are also of international significance). SSSIs contain the most unique and varied habitats which are maintained through active management and conservation. They contain plants and wildlife that would find it difficult to survive elsewhere. SSSIs are legally protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, amended by the CROW Act 2000 and the NERC Act 2006.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG): As part of the Council's Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance Strategy 2010-2015, the Council has the following operational SANG sites:

- Brookwood Country Park
- Horsell Common, Monument Road
- White Rose Lane
- Heather Farm wetland, Chobham Road.

These are identified to mitigate against potential harm to the SPA as a result of residential development. The designation of greenspace as SANG requires it to meet certain design standards set out by Natural England.

Special Protection Area (SPA): The Thames Basin Heaths SPA comprises a network of 13 sites across 11 Local Authorities in Surrey, Berkshire and Hampshire. These are protected under European Directive 79/409/EEC Birds Directive. Sites in Woking Borough include, Horsell Common SSSI, Brookwood Heath (part of Ash to Brookwood Heath SSSI), and Sheets Heath (part of Colony Bog and Bagshot Heath SSSI). Chobham Common SSSI, Ockham and Wisley SSSI and Whitmoor Common SSSI are also within 5km of the Borough.

Common Land: Common Land and town/village greens are protected under the Commons Act 2006. There are a number of areas of Common Land within the Borough:

- Bisley Common
- Brookwood Heath Common
- Castle Green
- Horsell Common
- Horsell Moor
- Kingfield Green
- Mayford Green
- Mill Moor
- Prey/Pray Heath
- Sheets Heath Common
- Smart's Heath
- St John's Lye
- Westfield Common

In addition there are areas such as Pyrford Common, a common in name not designation, but which is in part designated a village green.

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens: There are three registered historic parks and gardens within the Borough:

- Brookwood Cemetery
- Pyrford Court
- Sutton Place

RHS Garden Wisley is located south east, just outside of the Borough. These spaces of historic importance are part of the country's heritage assets. They are identified for their special character and heritage.

River/water features: The main water corridors and their tributaries in the Borough are the River Wey, Hoe Stream, the Basingstoke Canal, the River Bourne and The Wey Navigation. Development near water corridors should avoid impacts on the watercourse itself and the wildlife, for example by creating or maintaining natural buffer zones of an appropriate size.

Ancient Woodlands and Woodland: Surrey is the most wooded County in England and there are numerous ancient woodlands within Woking Borough. Surrey Wildlife Trust completed an inventory of Surrey's Ancient Woodland in 2011. These are ancient as they are known to be in existence since 1600. These are important for biodiversity.

Parks and gardens: The last comprehensive review of open spaces by the Council was undertaken as part of The Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities Audit (2008) in the Borough. It found there are 11 parks and gardens in the Borough, these are listed in the audit and includes urban parks, country parks and formal gardens. Examples include Woking Park and Goldsworth Park. The Muslim Burial Ground Peace Garden (opened November 2015) provides a beautiful and calm place of contemplation. Since the audit was carried out there has been the creation of a new park Hoe Valley Park and various SANGS (see above).

Amenity green space: The Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities Audit 2008 calculated 82 areas of amenity green space (which is informal recreation space in and around housing).

Children play areas and Teenage provision: The 2008 audit listed 36 play areas. Since then there have been a few new sites, with a total of 41 recorded. A number of sites have also been refurbished.

Outdoor sports and recreation: The Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities Audit 2008 calculated 39 outdoor sports facilities in the Borough, including golf courses, bowling greens and sports grounds. Since then new facilities have been created.

Allotments: There are 10 allotments in the Borough:

- Albert Drive, Sheerwater, Woking
- Derry's Field, Coniston Road, Old Woking
- Eden Grove Road, Byfleet
- Horsell Allotments, Bulbeggars Lane, Woking
- Knaphill Allotments, Creston Avenue, Woking
- Leisure Lane, off Camphill Road, West Byfleet
- Maybury Gardens, Alpha Road, Woking
- Sheets Heath Lane, Brookwood
- Winern Glebe, Rectory Lane, Byfleet
- Littlewick Allotments, Carthouse Lane

Cemeteries and churchyards: One cemetery (Brookwood Cemetery) and 5 churchyards. Multiple spaces available for burial and also serve a recreational function as places for walking, quiet contemplation and wildlife interest.

Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI): There are over 44 SNCIs in Woking Borough. These are non-statutory local designations, identified for their local nature conservation and geological value. These were identified in the early 1990s with an update in 2003. Sites were identified through joint working between Surrey County Council, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Natural England (then called English Nature), Environment Agency and Woking Borough Council. There are a number of regionally important wildlife sites which have been designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI). Pyrford Common, Roundbridge Farm, Grayshott Fields, Wheelers Meadow (South), Warren Farm Meadows, Pyrford Place Lake, the Hoe Stream and River Wey were designated as SNCI's to protect the important meadow, marsh, pasture, grassland and water course habitats.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC): There is one area of SAC to the West of the Borough. SACs are designated for their international importance. This is an area afforded special protection under the European Union's Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. The site is also an SSSI. The additional designation as a SAC is recognition that some or all of the wildlife habitats and species are particularly valued in a European context.

3.3 Environmental quality

The level of air pollutants (nitrogen dioxide, benzene, sulphur dioxide and particulates) in Woking is in line with the levels in Surrey and England. Levels for each of these pollutants do not exceed national standards for clean air.²⁴

Woking 2050²⁵ is the council's current climate change strategy, adopted in 2015. It sets out a vision to create a sustainable borough by reducing our environmental impact. In 2019, the council declared a climate emergency and pledged to become zero carbon across its own estate and operations by 2030. A Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) was put in place, building on ongoing work to deliver the objectives of Woking 2050.

A key tool the council is using to deliver the CEAP is Planet Woking. This aims to engage local residents, schools and businesses and enable them to play their part in enhancing the sustainability of the borough, and ultimately in achieving our aim of carbon neutrality. The website provides useful resources on what the council has been doing to tackle climate change locally as well as ideas and inspiration for what residents can do at home or work to help lighten their environmental footprint. It also has a dedicated section for younger audiences, titled *Little Planet Woking*.

Natural Woking, the council's biodiversity and green infrastructure strategy, was adopted in 2016 and runs to 2050. It aims to promote and celebrate the borough's diverse countryside and urban environments, while enhancing accessibility to our natural habitats and wildlife. The Natural Woking strategy highlights the benefits that enjoying green spaces can bring including to health and wellbeing.

The council is a member of the Surrey Air Alliance, and works in partnership with Surrey District and Boroughs and Surrey County Council's Public Health and Highways Teams to improve air quality across the county. The council offers a free airAlert service which provides advance warning (by email, text message or voicemail) of high pollution levels to local residents who have respiratory problems such as asthma, COPD and emphysema. The council also participated in the School Air Quality programme which aimed to improve air quality by changing behaviours and encouraging more active travel. This involved raising awareness via theatre workshops for pupils, school travel planning and provision of cycle proficiency training.

3.4 Income

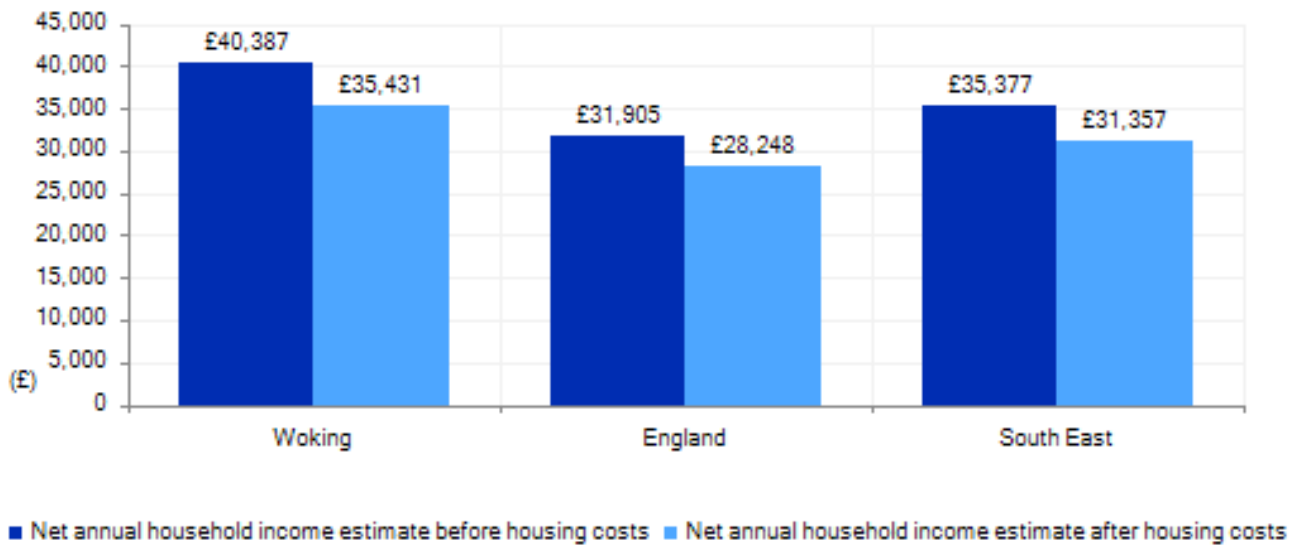
Woking is one of the 20% least deprived districts/unitary authorities in England²⁶.

The chart below shows the estimated average annual household income (equivalised to consider variations in household size) across Woking and comparator areas before and after housing costs. It shows that Woking is more prosperous than the South East on average.

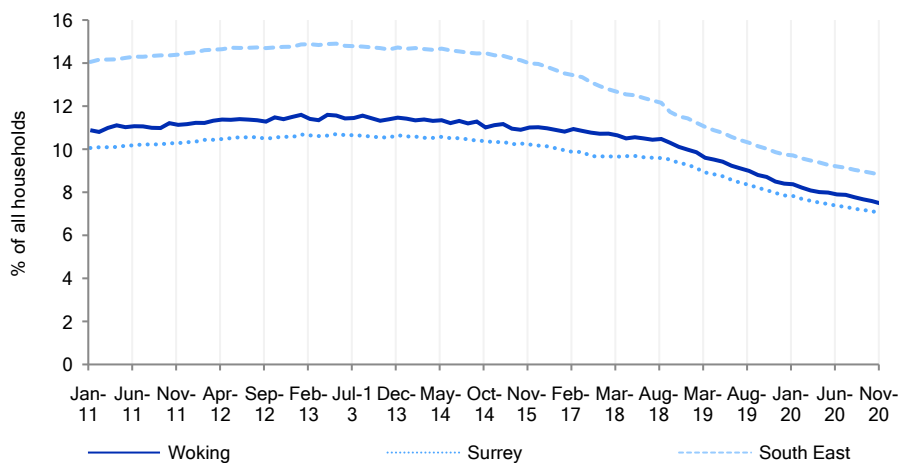
²⁴ The council monitors air quality across the borough by monitoring nitrogen dioxide levels via diffusion tubes. Each year the data from this monitoring is analysed and forms the Annual Status Report which is submitted to DEFRA for approval. These reports can be found at <https://www.woking.gov.uk/environmental-services/pollution/air-quality>

²⁵ <https://www.woking.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Nature/woking2050.pdf>

²⁶ Woking's Index of Deprivation score is 11.9 compared to an average for England of 21.9 (the more deprived an area, the higher the IMD score). None of Woking's lower super output areas fall among the most deprived 10% of small areas in England.

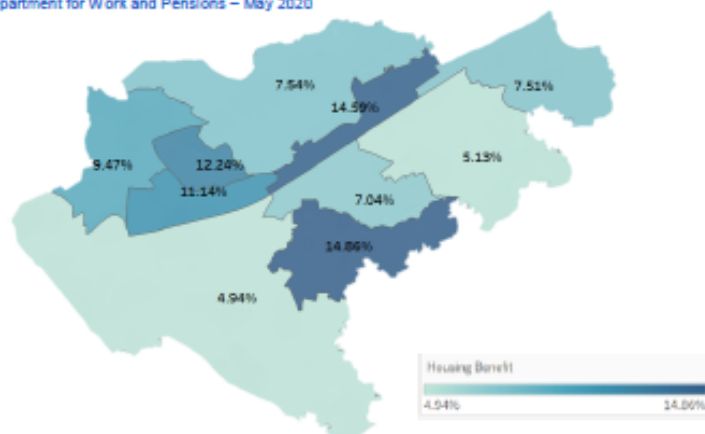


The chart below shows the trend for those claiming housing benefit. Woking ranks second highest in Surrey for housing benefit claimants, although Woking's housing benefit claimant numbers have been decreasing along with the national figures.



The map below shows the breakdown of housing benefit claimants by ward. Canalside and Hoe Valley have the largest numbers of claimants.

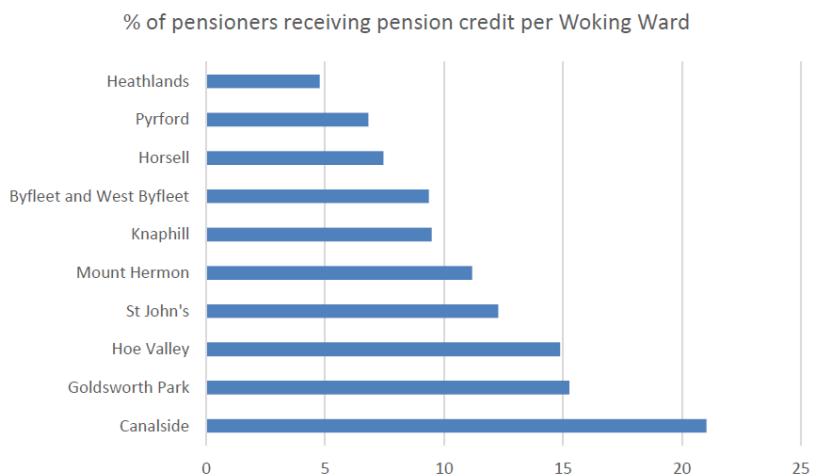
Figure: Shows the proportion of households receiving Housing Benefit (HB)
Source: Department for Work and Pensions – May 2020



9.7% of children (under 16s) in Woking live in low income families, compared to 12.9% in the South East and 17.0% England.

Income is a particular issue for pensioners in Woking. 7.8% of pensioners in Woking receive pension credit, which equates to 1,345 pensioners. This is higher than the average across Surrey (6.8%) but lower than England (12.9%).

Per ward, the breakdown is as follows:



Of Woking wards, Canalside has the highest percentage (21%) of pensioners receiving pension credit and it is the second highest ward across the whole of Surrey. The percentage there is more than three times higher than the county average.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic can be measured by looking at the increase in claimants between March and April 2020, as well as estimates of the number of people furloughed. This impact is relatively evenly spread, though the centre of the borough has been affected less. Areas such as West Byfleet & Pyrford North, Old Woking & Westfield, and Sheerwater have been the most affected.

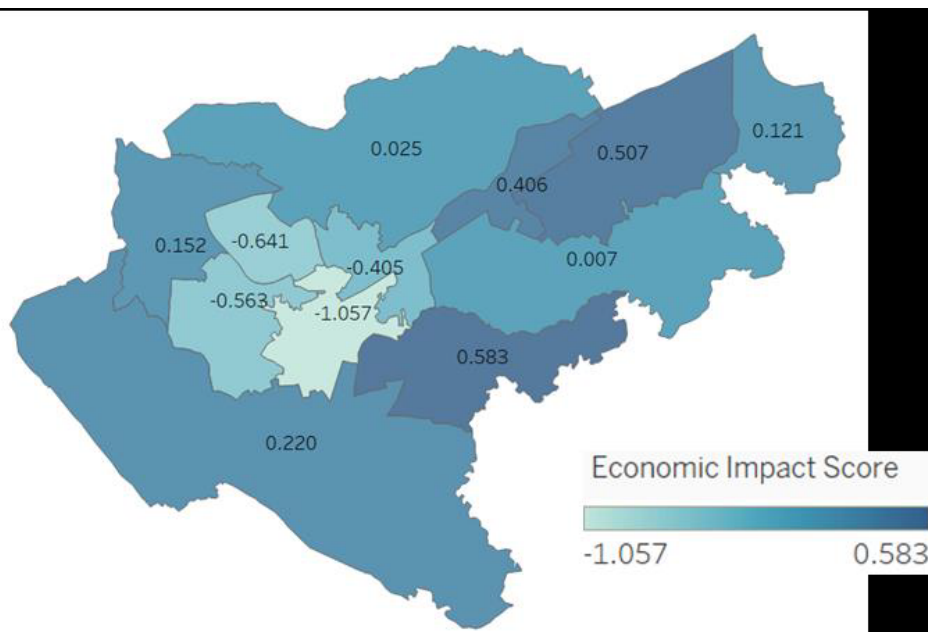


Figure 4: Shows the distribution of Covid-19 Economic Impact across MSOAs²⁷ in Woking (unemployment increases and people furloughed)

²⁷ Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs) are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales.

3.5 Built environment

Housing is a key component of the built environment which impacts the health and wellbeing of residents. The predominant housing tenure in Woking is owner occupation (71%), in line with the national figure. Woking is a very expensive housing market area and house prices have increased significantly over the last five years. The latest Land Registry data shows that the average house price of all property types in Woking borough was £425,728 in November 2020. This is a 10.3% (+ £39,687) increase since November 2015. The average house price in Woking remains significantly higher than the national average of £249,633.

The private rental sector accounts for 14.6% and social housing for 10.9% of all housing locally. The average private rent in Woking (£1,863 per calendar month) is lower than across Surrey as a whole (£2,074 pcm). However, rents are significantly above the Local Housing Allowance (Housing Benefit) for the area, which creates challenges for many residents to secure good quality affordable private rental accommodation. The latest HomeLet Rental Index²⁸ shows that average rental values in the South East have increased by 2.8% when compared to September last year. The table below gives a breakdown of asking rents for privately rented homes as of February 2021, together with the applicable Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and the potential shortfall between these figures.

| | LHA month (pcm) | Average Asking Rent (pcm) February 2021 | Potential Shortfall (pcm) |
|-------------|----------------------------|--|--|
| 1 Bed flat | £847.68 | £976.00 | £128.32 |
| 2 Bed flat | £1,096.98 | £1,291.00 | £194.02 |
| 2 Bed house | £1,096.98 | £1,261.00 | £164.02 |
| 3 Bed house | £1,371.24 | £1,542.00 | £170.76 |
| 4 Bed house | £1,795.08 | £2,042.00 | £246.92 |

The council operates a range of private sector access schemes to assist residents in securing private rented accommodation.

The Let's Rent service procures and supports tenancy sustainment for households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The service provides advice and support to tenants and landlords, and incentives for landlords. 365 tenancies were secured by the Let's Rent service between 1 April 2020 and 28 October 2020.

The council owns 3,361 properties (including temporary accommodation and shared ownership) in the borough. In addition, the council's housing provider partners (including ThamesWey Housing Limited²⁹ and housing associations) own approximately 2,200 in the borough (including shared ownership properties). In January 2021, there were 1,108 active households on the housing register.

The majority of housing register applicants need one and two bedroom properties (41% and 31% respectively), with three or more bedroom properties comprising the remaining 28% of current need.

The council's Core Strategy set a reasonable target of providing an additional 1,737 affordable dwellings for the period of the plan (2013 to 2027), equating to an annual target of 102 new affordable

²⁸ <https://homelet.co.uk/homelet-rental-index/south-east>

²⁹ ThamesWey Housing Limited (THL) is an independent limited company wholly owned by the council. THL was established to support the Woking Borough Council Housing and Economic Development Strategies through the provision of additional residential accommodation of all types.

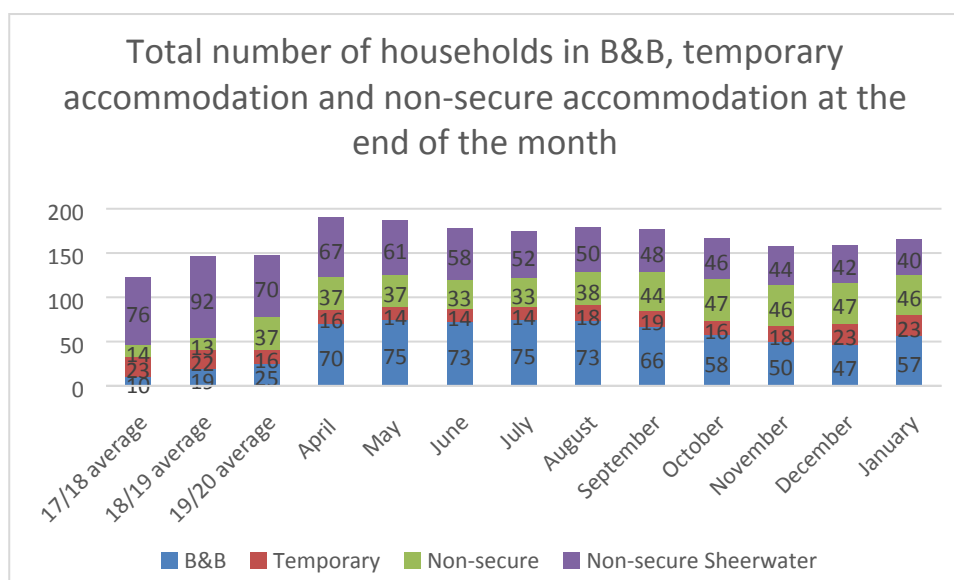
dwellings per annum. Of these, 70% of new affordable dwellings should be in the rented tenure (social and affordable) and 30% at intermediate level (including shared ownership). The council is committed to continuing to work with Registered Providers, Thameswey Housing Limited and private developers to facilitate the provision of 102 new affordable homes each year, as well as, identifying new-build opportunities on council-owned land. 581 affordable dwellings have been delivered to date comprising 316 affordable/social rent dwellings and 261 intermediate dwellings. There are a further 436 affordable homes planned for delivery by 2023/24, including 74 as part of the Sheerwater Regeneration programme.

Overcrowding is an issue affecting 4.79% of households in Woking. This is the highest level in Surrey (which has an average of 3.43%) and only slightly lower than the average for England (4.81%). There are links between overcrowding and both homelessness and mental health issues. Repeated lockdowns due to the pandemic have exacerbated the mental health consequences of overcrowding as people have spent more time at home.

The council is in the process of developing a housing strategy to cover the period 2021-2026 with the following priorities:

- Providing well designed high-quality homes that are affordable and meet local needs;
- Preventing homelessness and helping those in housing need;
- Helping people to achieve independence and wellbeing;
- Delivering an improved housing service to our tenants and leaseholders; and
- Enhancing choice, standards and quality within the private rental sector.

In recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of households who are homeless in Woking. This includes families, single people, young people and people who are sleeping rough. This trend is also reflected nationally, and the increase has been accelerated by the roll out of Universal Credit and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. At the end of October 2020, the council was accommodating 167 homeless households in some form of emergency accommodation. Typically, over the last 2 years, this number has been around 130 – 150. This increase reflects the additional numbers accommodated in hotels through the Covid-19 pandemic and the 'Everyone In' government initiative.



In the [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) 2020-2024, the council sets out how it will work with partners to address homelessness in Woking and support residents in housing crisis. Actions will be targeted at delivering on the following four strategic priorities:

- Preventing homelessness and offering early help;
- Providing a range of accommodation options;
- Supporting vulnerable residents through partnership working; and
- Reducing rough sleeping.

Planning policy and guidance at a local and national level shapes the built environment. Surrey County Council has developed specific guidance, **Creating Healthier Built Environments**, to support and enable health and planning colleagues to share planning policy which addresses public health issues and embeds health and wellbeing into planning decisions.

Within Woking, the council undertakes a sustainability appraisal approach to any planning activity. This ensures that health and wellbeing are appropriately considered. The council's planning strategy includes the integration of open spaces into development, securing spaces for recreation and ensuring sustainable alternative natural spaces.

3.6 Local business

Businesses in Woking continue to face unprecedented challenges in keeping their businesses solvent. Following the initial lockdown, the Government gradually eased the restrictions on retail businesses and allowed them to reopen from June 16 onwards. Over the subsequent six weeks, most businesses were allowed to re-open. During lockdown, online sales increased due to the restriction of movement faced by consumers. However, there was support for local shops - mostly food and drink outlets - and an increase in take-away meal sales. The subsequent lockdowns have seen these businesses adapt again in order to remain trading, adapting their services to meet local needs.

Woking Town Centre relies heavily on office workers to frequent the restaurants and cafes, as well as the local shops. Before lockdown, there were nearly 50,000 office workers in the borough. We estimate that in the period to September only 10% were occupying space, as the Government continued to encourage people to work from home if they could. With such a large drop in footfall, pavement-facing businesses will struggle to survive much longer if people do not come back to their offices or leave their homes to shop.

We have seen a small amount of businesses shut down but with the Government's Furlough Scheme extended until summer 2021, and orders not picking up in some areas, Woking is likely to witness more firms going out of businesses.

3.7 Business start-up and migration

According to the latest report by the [Inform Direct Review of Company Formations](#), using data from Companies House and the Office for National Statistics, SURREY registered 11,997 new businesses last year, an 8.7% increase on the 11,032 formed in 2019. Woking is seventh in the table of 11 Surrey districts covered by the research, with **1,034 new companies formed in 2020**.

In terms of business migration, key statistics from the 20/21 financial year highlight that 26 businesses moved into the Borough, 28 businesses relocated within the Borough, 6 businesses left the Borough and 30 businesses closed.

3.8 Kickstart Scheme

Approximately 60 new jobs have been created in the Borough through local businesses using the Kickstart Scheme. The Scheme provides funding to create new job placements for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long-term unemployment.

3.9 Town Centre

With the usual office population in the town centre down, as office staff were advised by the Government to work from home or operate with limited numbers in offices, the Town Centre is quiet. The knock-on effect is the reduced spend in associated shops and services. Many of these retail and hospitality businesses, like others across the Borough, have adjusted their opening hours.

The increase in footfall over the summer, as non-essential retail and hospitality reopened, has now levelled off with the message from central Government returning for people to work from home if they can.

3.10 Shopping Centres

As non-essential retail and hospitality reopened over the summer, there was an increase in footfall within the centres. Aside from chain restaurants closures, most retail and hospitality units have opened back up, with a few new operators in Woking Market. Social distancing measures are in place across the centres and within individual units but with the lower than usual footfall it feels quiet, and the stock levels in some stores reflects this.

The largest increase in visitor footfall to Woking Shopping was during w/c 15 June, when non-essential retailers were allowed to reopen.

The numbers are down compared to the same period last year. In June 2020, the footfall stood at about 19% of the 2019 figures – c. 50,000 per week. Following non-essential retailers reopening, footfall increased but only to around 30% of 2019 levels – c. 80,000 per week.

Shops reopened after lockdown to between half and two thirds of their normal footfall. They have still not returned to 100% of pre-lockdown levels.

Woking Shopping's Springboard system to record footfall at the shopping centres was not installed until early 2020 so a full year's stats is not available. Nationally, they reported that UK footfall is down 73.8% year on year.

The footfall of short term tickets across the Council car parks, (Shoppers, Brewery Road and Victoria Way) is a good indication of visitor numbers across the town centre. Due to the forced closure of many shops, and number of additional restrictions imposed because of Covid, the footfall of short term car park tickets was on average 71% down from July to January 19/20, compared to the same period in 20/21.

EXECUTIVE – 15 JULY 2021

TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

Executive Summary

The Council has committed to prepare a newly defined Town Centre Masterplan to help guide future sustainable development within the Town Centre. As highlighted in the Corporate Plan, the Council is establishing a stronger commitment to embedding a culture of consultation into decision making process, empowering communities and making decisions alongside communities. The Town Centre Masterplan has arisen out of this commitment and is further supported by concerns expressed by Members, residents and developers about the lack of a single planning document that sets out a positive framework to guide development and investment in the Town Centre, including guidance on heights for tall buildings. The report provides an overview of:

- the concept Masterplanning and the objectives of the Woking Town Centre Masterplan;
- the journey so far to focus most new development in the Town Centre;
- the process for preparing the Masterplan and its planning status;
- the options for the Masterplan;
- the timescale for preparing the Masterplan;
- the estimated budget for preparing the Masterplan; and
- the community engagement and consultation that would be undertaken to inform the Masterplan.

The Executive is requested to note the overview as detailed in the report and to approve the budget of £100,000 for the preparation of the Masterplan. Delegated authority should be given to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning to oversee the preparation of the Masterplan to its completion and required specifications.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) the overview of the Town Centre Masterplan, as set out in the report, be noted;
- (ii) the budget for the preparation of the Masterplan, which is estimated to be £100,000, be approved; and
- (iii) delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to oversee the preparation of the Town Centre Masterplan to its adoption.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To help provide a framework to guide development within the Town Centre.

| |
|---|
| The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendations set out above. |
|---|

Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Giorgio Framalicco, Director of Planning
Email: giorgio.framalicco@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3440

Contact Person: Ernest Amoako, Planning Policy Manager
Email: ernest.amoako@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3427

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Gary Elson
Email: cllrgary.elson@woking.gov.uk

Shadow Portfolio Holder: Councillor Deborah Hughes
Email: cllrdeborah.hughes@woking.gov.uk

Date Published: 7 July 2021

1.0 Introduction and why the Masterplan is being prepared

- 1.1 The Council has committed to preparing a newly defined Town Centre Masterplan to set out the long term vision for the Town Centre up to 2027, and to provide the necessary framework to help guide development decisions within the Town Centre. As highlighted in the Corporate Plan, the Council is establishing a stronger commitment to embedding a culture of consultation into the decision making process, empowering communities and making decisions alongside communities.
- 1.2 There are a number of different views about what the height limit of buildings in the Town Centre should be. This is impacting on decisions on planning applications with implications for future housing provision. Presently, there is no single document that sets out the framework to guide development at the Town Centre. As a result, there is uncertainty about how the Council's planned future development up to 2030 would visually manifest itself on the ground. The Town Centre Masterplan is intended to address these concerns by setting out the necessary framework to guide development decisions.
- 1.3 The Masterplan cannot concern itself only with the heights of future tall buildings. The Masterplan needs to support sustainable development and investment in the town to support the vibrancy and vitality of the centre following the soon to be completed Victoria Place development. This significant investment in the town is a catalyst for further change and presents an opportunity to bring further positive change.
- 1.4 The Council has invested a significant amount of capital and has adopted various policies and strategies to improve the overall environment of the Town Centre. This includes investment in the public realm and improved cycling and pedestrian options. The Town Centre Masterplan will bring the investment and policies together to provide a single document that could be used to showcase the opportunities that exists within the Town Centre to attract further investment.
- 1.5 The justification for the Masterplan has been well debated by the Executive at its meeting on 25 March 2021 and resolved by Council at its meeting on 8 April 2021. There is broad political support for its preparation.
- 1.6 The geographical definition of the Town Centre for the purposes of the Masterplan is the Town Centre boundary defined by the Proposals Map of the Core Strategy. The Proposals Map can be accessed by visiting: <https://www.woking2027.info/allocations/propmapinsets2018.pdf>.
- 1.7 The Council has an adopted policy, Policy CS1 (A Spatial Strategy for Woking Borough) of the Core Strategy that identifies the Town Centre as the primary focus of sustainable growth to maintain its status as an economic hub with a diverse and innovative economy, and a transport hub which provides transport services, links and communication linking people to jobs, services and facilities. The Core Strategy directs most new development to previously developed land in the Town Centre which offers the best access to a range of services and facilities to minimise the need to travel. The Town Centre is a sustainable location for the future direction of development. The Core Strategy encourages high density development that could include tall buildings in the Town Centre in a way that builds on its overall character and appearance and does not compromise that of nearby areas. This approach to the spatial distribution of development across the Borough is intended to minimise the amount of land that would be needed to be released from the Green Belt to meet future development needs.
- 1.8 In quantitative terms, Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy earmarks the Town Centre to accommodate 2,180 new dwellings, 27,000 sq.m of office floorspace and 75,300 sq.m of retail floorspace between 2010 and 2027. In addition to these figures, the Council has accepted a Housing and Infrastructure Fund (HIF) award of £95M to replace the Victoria Arch. The award requires the Council to deliver housing on its own sites, and use its best endeavours to deliver an additional 3,304 new dwellings in the Town Centre by 2030 over and above what has been committed in the Core Strategy. Overall, from now to 2030, taking into account housing delivery

to date, the Town Centre is identified to accommodate about 4,555 new homes. With this volume of planned development, the Town Centre is expected to undergo a significant change, which in part, had already started with developments such as Victoria Square. The change has to be managed to be sustainable, and the Masterplan will assist in achieving that. Without a Masterplan, it is difficult to engage and promote the town and how the level of development proposed will look and feel and how the level of development will support the vibrant mixed use town centre which is aspired.

- 1.9 There is no doubt about the impact of the pandemic on the economic vitality of the Town Centre. Developers, investors, local businesses and residents need certainty to invest and consistency in the decision making process of the Council. The Town Centre Masterplan would provide detailed framework and certainty on how the delivery of the development requirements of the Core Strategy and the HIF award will be managed.

2.0 What is a Masterplan and the objectives of the Woking Town Centre Masterplan

- 2.1 There is no legal planning definition of a Masterplan. It has been used by various people to mean different things. For the purposes of the newly defined Woking Town Centre Masterplan, it is an overarching one stop planning document and a spatial layout that sets out the opportunities that exists in the Town Centre for businesses to thrive, for people to live and work and as a destination to visit for cultural and other recreational activities. It is a document that will be used to structure proposed land uses and development within the Town Centre and sets out the principles and standards of what would make development acceptable. It will provide a long term conceptual layout and vision that paints a picture of how the Town Centre would look like by 2030 when the planned developments have been achieved. It will set out detailed standards and principles to guide the day to day decisions to achieve the vision. The Masterplan will be a document that is informed by a robust evidence base with an iterative community engagement central to its preparation. It would be about setting a vision for what the future could look like and working in partnership with all key stakeholders to achieve that.

- 2.2 Within the context of the above definition, the objectives of the Woking Town Centre Masterplan are:

- Provide a vision for the Town Centre that will drive investment decisions in a coherent and sustainable manner and ensure that Woking continues to be a destination of choice;
- Provide a clear framework and principles for development in the town centre to allow proposals to be assessed in a comprehensive manner;
- Provide a visual illustration of the skyline for the Town Centre, with height guidance for tall buildings, taking into account the topography and other factors that exists with the Town Centre;
- Bring uses and buildings together to create a unique sense of place for people to live, work and visit whilst enhancing the ecological value of the area and the wellbeing of people who live within it;
- Map out connectivity of people to key services and facilities such as the station and jobs and highlight opportunities to improve non car based transport options;
- Provide clear principles and standards of what would be acceptable development;
- To create a town centre environment that would attract investment to respond to the post pandemic local economic, environmental and social conditions;
- Set out the quality and quantity of open space and the public realm;
- Provide certainty to developers, local residents and businesses on the future direction of growth of the Town Centre;
- To provide an opportunity for the local community to be involved in the masterplanning of the town centre.

3.0 What is the journey so far – rationale for the spatial distribution of development in the Borough

- 3.1 The story about why and how the Council had been focusing most new development in the Town Centre needs to be revisited as part of the big conversation to inform the Masterplan. The overall strategy to accommodate most new development in high density development within the Town Centre had evolved over many years with significant local community input. A knowledge of the journey so far is important to understanding why the Town Centre is earmarked to be the focus on most new development.
- 3.2 In 2009, the Council spent a significant amount of time to engage with local residents, businesses, key stakeholders and Members to understand and agree the issues that the community would like the Council to address in the Core Strategy. There was broad consensus for:
- Housing to meet the diverse needs of the community, in particular, Affordable Housing;
 - High quality jobs; in particular, support for small and medium sized enterprise formation by encouraging a range of types and sizes of premises;
 - Improved retail offer;
 - Leisure and community facilities;
 - Infrastructure and services to support development;
 - Improved transport and accessibility;
 - Measures to address and adapt to climate change and protect the environment and heritage assets.
- 3.3 The Council had understood at the time that any strategy to address the above issues would need a vision that gives a clear idea of the destination when everything had been achieved. In this regard, there was an extensive community engagement about what the community would like the Borough to look by 2027 when all the issues they had identified had been addressed. Three options for the spatial distribution of development were discussed with the community. These options were:
- Directing most new development to previously developed land in the town, district and local centres with minimum encroachment into the Green Belt as possible;
 - Intensifying development densities in the less dense areas of the Borough such as Hook Heath and Horsell; and
 - Significant extension on development into the Green Belt.
- 3.4 There was unanimous agreement to focus most new development on previously development, in well designed, high density development that could include tall buildings within the Town Centre. The spatial strategy for the Borough and the Town Centre specific policy of the Core Strategy – Policies CS1 and CS2 of the Core Strategy were born out of the outcome of the community engagement. Full details of the chronology of the journey so far is included in Appendix 1.
- 3.5 The Masterplan will be informed by the ‘big conversation’ with the community. Part of this big conversation would be explaining to the public the journey so far, in particular, the options for the spatial distribution of development to determine if the agreed approach continue to have broad community support.

4.0 Options for the Masterplan

- 4.1 Three realistic options for the Masterplan have been identified for consultation. The description for each of them is set out in the Table below. The comments that would be received during the consultation on the concept and options for Masterplan will inform the selection of the preferred option for the Masterplan. At this stage, Members are only requested to note the options. The options identified for consultation are:

| Options | Description |
|----------|---|
| Option 1 | Woking Townscape Strategy - This Masterplan will focus on the visual illustration of an acceptable skyline for the Town Centre, with a clear definition of the limit on height of tall buildings. It will be a single themed Masterplan that is limited in scope of its coverage. It will be adopted as Planning Document with the status of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). It can be prepared within the existing strategic planning policy framework. It will be relatively less expensive to prepare and would take less time to prepare. It could be done within 6 months – 9 months. |
| Option 2 | Town Centre Integrated Masterplan - This Masterplan will bring uses and buildings together with clearly mapped out connectivity of people to jobs, key services and facilities. It will set a clear limit on height of tall buildings and their impacts on the wider area. It will provide clear principles and standards of what would make development acceptable. It would create a Town Centre environment that would attract investment to respond to the post pandemic local economic, social and environmental conditions. It will provide a clear framework for decision making on development proposals. It will be an expression of all current commitments to 2030. It can be prepared within the context of the existing planning policy framework. There is the risk that it could be undermined by the debate on height of buildings. It will be a planning document with a statutory status as Supplementary Planning Document. It would take about 12 - 14 months to complete. |
| Option 3 | Town Centre Holistic Masterplan - This Masterplan will be all-encompassing document that goes beyond planning matters. It would seek to analyse existing conditions and what had been done so far and identify what else could be done to create an environment for future inclusive growth, enhancing sustainability and liveability of the Town Centre. It will create an identity that will define the future character for the Town Centre and harness its cultural and heritage assets. It will set out proposals for blue and green infrastructure. It will articulate a new vision for the Town Centre. It will bring together the long term economic, social and environmental aspirations of the community. Given its wider scope, it will not be a |

| | |
|--|--|
| | planning document. There is the risk that it would not have the necessary legal planning status to defend planning decisions. It might trigger the review of the Core Strategy. There could be potential conflict with the adopted development plan for the area. It would be relatively more expensive to prepare and would take a long time to prepare. It could take between 24 months to 36 months to prepare. |
|--|--|

5.0 Consultation and engagement and how the Masterplan will be prepared

- 5.1 Community engagement will be central to the preparation of the Masterplan. Most of the work will be done in-house, however, specialist consultants will be used to support the Council, initially for community engagement and for defining the skyline and height of buildings.
- 5.2 The preparation of the Masterplan will be used as a test to begin the process of establishing a new dialogue with the local community about what they envisage the Town Centre to be by 2030 and the role that they think the Masterplan could play to achieve that. The initial engagement will focus on the concept of Masterplanning rather than the detailed contents of a Masterplan. In parallel to this initial consultation, the story about the journey to date will be explained and discussed to seek views on whether the trajectory of the spatial distribution of development as set out in Appendix 1 should continue into the future. Given the importance of the initial engagement, and the necessity to reach as many sections of the community as possible, a specialist consultant will be engaged to work with the Council to undertake this consultation exercise. The outcome will inform the preferred option for Masterplan.
- 5.3 The Council has agreed to deliver about 3300 additional new homes over and above the Core Strategy requirement within the Town Centre on the back of the HIF award. The Council would have wished to consult the public before submitting the bid for the award, however, it was not possible to do so due to the time period that was given by the Government to submit bids. The road network under Victoria Arch is a key congestion hotspot in the Town Centre. Cycling and walking under the Arch does not meet the standard the Council aspires to. It had been a long term ambition of the Council to address the problem. This has not been possible to date due to the cost of the scheme and the inability to fund it through developer contributions and/or other public sector funding sources. The HIF award was once in a life time opportunity to secure the necessary funding to do something substantial to address the congestion in the area and unlock a number of sites for development that the Council believed added significant additional value to the vision for the Town Centre. The scheme will also lay the foundation for significant rail improvements such as the Woking Flyover. Given the scale of the housing provision, it is appropriate to seek views from the community about the overall scale of the housing to be provided and how it should be spatially managed. The initial consultation on the Masterplan will also cover this particular matter. In particular, the consultation would provide opportunity to update the community on what had been done so far to deliver the scheme.
- 5.4 The Council has adopted a digital engagement platform to provide a civic site for engagement and consultation, as highlighted in the Corporate Plan. The platform, the Woking Community Forum, will be used as the platform for the community engagement. The community engagement will be an iterative process where everyone would have the opportunity to comment on each stage of the process and for the Council to note and respond.
- 5.5 After the initial engagement, the next stage will be a comprehensive review and feasibility work to understand the social, economic and environment context within which the Masterplan is prepared. This will assist in refining the scope and objectives of the Masterplan. It will also help to define any gaps in evidence base studies that would be needed to support the Masterplan. The Woking Community Forum would allow the local community to input into this task.

- 5.6 Baseline information will be assembled, including housing, retail and employment data and future infrastructure delivery.
- 5.7 Design consultants will be engaged to create a Town Centre skyline with a defined limit on height of development taken into account the baseline data.
- 5.8 Opportunities that exist on individual key sites will be mapped out. The relationship between sites, uses and services and facilities will be mapped. This will be overlaid by the connectivity between them and existing/proposed infrastructure. A draft Masterplan will be prepared.
- 5.9 There will be significant Members' engagement. There will be a Private Members' Briefing on the emerging outcome of the Masterplan. The draft Masterplan will be reported to the LDF Working Group, Executive and Council to seek their comments and an authority to formally consult the wider public. Working communities will be given sufficient time to engage in the process. Representations received will be integral to how proposals are developed. The Final Draft Masterplan will be reported to the Local Development Framework (LDF) Working Group, Executive and, if required, Council for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

6.0 Timescale for the key stages of the Masterplan

- 6.1 The Council is keen to begin the Masterplanning process as soon as possible. The first and critical part of the process is community engagement on the concept of Masterplan and what the Town Centre Masterplan should be. Part of the community engagement would also be about how the spatial distribution of development has evolved and the role of the Town Centre in meeting future development needs. To work with and support the Council, a specialist consultant will be engaged to undertake this community engagement. It is expected that the community engagement will begin in July 2021. The outcome of this initial engagement will help determine the nature and type of Masterplan for the Town Centre and how long it will take to prepare. Members will be updated in due course on the timing of the subsequent stages of the process when that becomes clear.

7.0 Budget

- 7.1 It is estimated that the Masterplan would cost about £100,000 to prepare. This will include the cost of appointing two separate specialist consultants to support various technical aspects of the Masterplan. The budget will be funded from the Investment Programme and Planning Services' Service Plan budget.

8.0 Corporate Strategy

- 8.1 The Masterplan will provide a single document to showcase the opportunities for investment in the Town Centre. It will set a clear direction and framework to provide certainty and consistency in decisions. This is necessary to creating the necessary environment for businesses to invest. It will provide space for partnership working to deliver corporate objectives. The Masterplan directs most new development to previously developed land to ensure sustainable development and efficient use of land. It will lay good foundation for smart and strong economic growth of the Town Centre. It will facilitate the delivery of housing, in particular, affordable housing. Its preparation will be informed by continuous community and Members' involvement. The masterplan supports the following objectives of the Corporate Plan:

People – A healthy, inclusive and engaged community-

- Improving the health and wellbeing of all residents – the masterplan will set out areas of open space, health and leisure provision and support the town centre as a cultural hub. The masterplan will support the emerging Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

- Reducing social inequality – the masterplan will guide the delivery of new housing and affordable housing developments and support both the Homelessness and Housing Strategy.
- Engaging our communities – engagement will be central to the preparation of the masterplan.

Place – An enterprising, vibrant and sustainable borough-

- Promoting a strong economy – setting a vision for the town centre will promote investment, support business retention and promote Woking as a destination for business to relocate to.
- Improving the Borough's biodiversity and green infrastructure – the masterplan will set out the quality and quantity of open space.
- Sustainable development – The masterplan will highlight the vision of a sustainable and inclusive town centre and identify further opportunities for energy efficiency and generation.

Us – An innovative, proactive and effective Council -

- Strengthening partnerships – the masterplan will be developed following engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders and the wider community.
- Effective use of resources – setting a clear vision of the town centre would support the effective use of limited resources

9.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 9.1 It is estimated that the preparation of the Masterplan will cost about £100,000. It is proposed for the budget to be funded from the Investment Programme. The Executive is requested to approve the budget for the Masterplan. Most of the work will be done in-house. However, there are some technical specialist aspects of the Masterplan that would require consultancy support. The quality of those technical aspects of the Masterplan could be undermined if the budget is not approved. The indirect benefits that the Masterplan is likely to generate would far outweigh the cost of preparing the Masterplan.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 9.2 There are no equalities and human resource implications. This will be monitored and reported if any arise.

Legal

- 9.3 Planning law would require the Masterplan to be prepared in accordance with the development plan for the area. Care will be taken to ensure that this is adhered to.
- 9.4 Appointment of consultants will follow due processes of the Council.

10.0 Corporate Leadership Team and Members involvement

- 10.1 The Corporate Leadership Team has identified the Town Centre Masterplan as a priority project. A Project Mandate has been agreed to start the Masterplan, subject to Executive approving the recommendations of this report. The Director of Planning is the Project Sponsor for the Masterplan and can be contacted by: giorgio.framalitto@woking.gov.uk. The Planning Policy Manager is the Project Manager and can be contacted by: ernest.amoako@woking.gov.uk. They will be willing to clarify any issues that Members might have throughout the process. Members' involvement will be key to ensuring that the

Masterplan addresses their concerns and that of local residents. All effort will be made to ensure that the Executive is informed at each stage of its preparation.

- 10.2 The draft Masterplan will be reported to the LDF Working Group, the Executive and Council before it is adopted.

REPORT ENDS

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTS

The preparation of the Local Development Documents (LDD) have evolved over a period of time with community involvement placed at the centre of their preparation. The timelines for the process of preparing the LDDs are set out below:

Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD)

Purpose – it identifies specific sites to enable the delivery of the Core Strategy

Timeline for its preparation

| Stage of preparation | Date | Number of representations |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| Initial scoping of issues | May 2012 | Not applicable |
| Regulation 18 consultation | 18 June 2015 – 31 July 2015 | 32,712 representations from 1,692 individuals |
| Consultation of land east of Martyrs Lane | 6 January 2017 – 27 February 2017 | 32,164 representations from 3,018 individuals |
| Regulation 19 consultation | 5 November 2018 – 17 December 2018 | 3,583 representations from 2,797 individuals |
| Submission to Secretary of State | 31 July 2019 | Not applicable |
| Date of Hearings | 2 December 2019 – 11 December 2019 | Not applicable |
| Consultation on main modifications | 14 September 2020 – 16 December 2020 | To be determined at end of consultation period 16 December 2020. |

Development Management Policies DPD

Purpose – it sets out detailed policies for the day to day management of development across the Borough.

Timeline for its preparation

| Stage of preparation | Date | Number of representations |
|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Initial scoping of issues | May 2012 | Not applicable |
| Regulation 18 consultation | 19 February 2015 – 3 April 2015 | 12 |
| Regulation 19 consultation | 26 October 2015 – 7 December 2015 | 29 |
| Submission of DPD to Secretary of State | 29 February 2016 | Not applicable |
| Date of Hearings | 10 May 2016 | Not Applicable |
| Adoption of DPD | 20 October 2016 | Not applicable |

Core Strategy

Purpose – it determines the overall quantum of development, broad spatial distribution of development across the Borough and set strategic policies to ensure acceptable standards for development

Timeline for its preparation

| Stage of preparation | Date | Number of representations |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Issues and Options consultation | 27 October 2009 – 7 December 2009 | 401 |
| Draft Core Strategy consultation | 5 November 2010 – 7 January 2011 | 631 |
| Consultation of Publication document | 25 July 2011 – 23 September 2011 | 352 |
| Submission to Secretary of State | 16 December 2011 | Not applicable |
| Examination Hearings | 20 March 2012 – 4 April 2012 | Not applicable |
| Adoption | October 2012 | Not applicable |

A typical example of how the community was engaged during each of the consultation exercise (Site Allocations DPD)

Direct letters/emails were sent to over 6,000 individuals and organisations on the consultation database.

| Consultation method | Date | Purpose | Tasks |
|--|------------------------------|---|---|
| Purpose and scope of consultation | | | |
| The purpose and scope of the consultation needs to be clear to everyone. It is solely on the proposed modifications to the SA DPD. | Pre- and during consultation | This is key to ensure the public are clear about the purpose of the consultation. Therefore helping to focus representations on the proposed modifications. | Communications Plan to help to communicate this carefully and effectively |
| Political engagement | | | |

| Consultation method | Date | Purpose | Tasks |
|---|--|---|---|
| Members will receive a briefing note on the consultation. Members are encouraged to direct queries from members of the public to the Planning Policy team, through general contact methods (telephone & email) and to online meetings. | Pre-consultation. Briefing shortly before the start of the consultation period. Ongoing throughout consultation period for queries and discussion. | Raising awareness and ensuring Members continuous involvement | Members of the Working Group have received a Briefing Note. Officers will be on hand to answer questions from members and the public, by telephone and email. |
| Publicity | | | |
| Press release, general – local newspapers | Prepare beforehand. Week 1 publication. | Awareness raising of the consultation in local press. | Publish in local papers, Publish on Council's website, with link to Woking 2027 website. |
| Press release and updates to residents - Residents Associations - Other hard to reach groups targeting (see p5) | Prepare beforehand. Week 1 publication. | Awareness raising | Publish in Neighbourhood Forum websites and Council's website. |
| Public notice to press: Statement of Representation Procedure | Prepare beforehand. Week 1 publication. | Awareness raising of the consultation in local press. | Publish in local paper, Council's website as per specific details of consultation |
| Letters/ email mail out to notify people in the LDF database | Week 1, day 1 for emails. Letters: Wednesday/ Thursday of week before week 1 | Awareness raising | Ensure mail out is posted in time to reach destination in reasonable time. Aim is for mail to reach destination on or prior to start of consultation. |
| Publicity – posters and banners | Prepare beforehand. | Awareness raising and pointing to where info available | Communications Team to help prepare posters to highlight key messages of the consultation. |
| Website: Planning Policy (Woking 2027) | Go live at or before start of consultation | Main portal to publicise and view consultation documents, obtain representation forms and find details other means of submission. Also listing of consultation events. | Ensuring website is easily accessible with clarity of what the consultation is about and where further information can be found. Website will be updated when necessary to reflect any new information that might be available. |

| Consultation method | Date | Purpose | Tasks |
|---|--|--|---|
| Website: Main Council LDF page: news/ front page, with summary/ press release and link to Planning Policy (Woking 2027) website | Go live at or before start of consultation | Main portal to publicise and link to consultation documents, obtain representation forms and find details other means of submission. Also listing of consultation events. | As above. |
| Twitter and Facebook | Week 1 (publish) and throughout consultation period | Raising awareness, stimulating discussion, engaging younger people. | To be set up prior to consultation and regularly reviewed to maximise use. |
| Woking Magazine, delivered to all households in the Borough | W/c 22 October | Awareness raising and pointing to where info available | Communications Team to help prepare text |
| Publicity to hard to reach and specific consultation groups | | | |
| Older and disabled people – email and letter notification; -engagement through Residents Associations and other representative groups. | Week 1 –email Letters: Wednesday/ Thursday of week before week 1 RA/ Representative groups: contact prior to consultation | Raising awareness, engaging 'hard to reach' groups. | Updated consultation database - it includes details of representative groups. Contact these groups and the relevant RAs prior to consultation. |
| Ethnic and minority groups – email notification and engagement through representative groups. | Week 1 | Raising awareness | As above |
| Woking Youth Council – email notification. | Week 1 | Raising awareness | As above |
| Voluntary sector – email notification | Week 1 | Awareness raising | As above |
| Climate change group - email notification | Week 1 | Awareness raising | As above |
| Locations for publicity and consultation documents | | | |

| Consultation method | Date | Purpose | Tasks |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>Woking Library</p> <p>– hard copies of consultation documents to be deposited and viewed in a Covid19 secure manner</p> <p>-consultation posters displayed</p> | <p>Week 1</p> <p>Contact has been made prior to consultation.</p> | <p>Location where hard copies of consultation documents can be viewed, albeit in a Covid19 secure manner.</p> <p>Note there is nowhere to sit and study documents at present. There will be a display of the proposals map on a wall/board.</p> <p>Awareness raising</p> | <p>Only Woking library is open at present. This will be monitored and updated to reflect up to date guidance and operational requirements, including potential re-opening of the Borough's other libraries to the public.</p> <p>Detailed information including opening times can be found at https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/libraries/news-and-events/library-news/coronavirus .</p> <p>Provide consultation documents and posters for display.</p> |
| <p>Civic offices: consultation posters in front windows.</p> | <p>Week 1</p> | <p>Awareness raising and directing public to where information and consultation documents are available.</p> <p>Note the Civic Offices are closed to the public at the current time.</p> | <p>Prepare and display posters</p> |
| <p>Publicity (posters) at:</p> <p>-Railway stations (Woking, Byfleet, West Byfleet, Brookwood, New Haw)</p> <p>-West Byfleet Business Association.</p> | <p>Week 1</p> <p>Contact has been made prior to consultation.</p> | <p>Awareness raising and directing public to where information and consultation documents are available.</p> | <p>Posters to be sent or delivered to Station Manager</p> |
| <p>Publicity (posters and/or banners) in empty shops – town centre and local centres around the Borough, where possible.</p> | <p>Prepare beforehand.</p> <p>Display from start week 1.</p> | <p>Awareness raising and pointing to where information and consultation documents are available</p> | <p>Identify which shops are available to use</p> |
| <p>Village/ local notice boards or similar (posters), through Residents Associations and</p> | <p>Week 1 & make contact prior to consultation</p> | <p>Raising awareness</p> | <p>Make contact prior to consultation.</p> <p>Posters to be sent/ delivered to RA and NF contacts</p> |

| Consultation method | Date | Purpose | Tasks |
|--|--|--|--|
| Neighbourhood Forums. To include Mayford Village Hall, Saunders Lane and similar in West Byfleet and Pyrford. | | | |
| Posters on various "Borough Boards" including town centre and on major roads. | Weeks 1 & 2, maybe longer | Awareness raising | Ensure posters are put at the correct locations and time period that posters are allowed to be displayed |
| Publicise via news section on Surrey CC 'Woking area' webpage | Pre- consultation and Week 1 | Awareness raising | Make contact prior to consultation |
| Woking Chamber of Commerce -Email notification - Meeting attendance and discussion | Week 1: email Meetings (via Zoom): Pre-scheduled meetings before and during the consultation period | Targeted meeting with the local business group to explain, clarify & discuss the Site Allocations DPD. Chambers will be sent email notification to distribute to Chambers members | Attend Chambers meeting to explain and discuss detail of the consultation with key dates and request they forward email notification to Chambers members. Week 1 –email Chambers |
| Telephone and virtual meetings | | | |
| Meetings via Zoom | Initially, three meetings are planned. However the number and timings of meetings will be responsive to demand. Week 2: DATE & TIME Week 4: DATE & TIME Week 5: DATE & TIME | Zoom meetings to explain, clarify, discuss the proposed modifications to the Site Allocations DPD. | The team now has Premium Zoom access (ICT) to enable longer meetings. Ensure any tech issues are resolved beforehand Write guidance for participants to assist with access and the smooth running of meetings. Publicise meeting times on website and in email/letter notification in Week 1. Participants must contact PP team to obtain meeting login details. Take minutes during meeting. |
| Meetings by telephone | Throughout consultation period | Telephone call can be set up to explain, clarify and discuss the proposed modifications | Publicise the means of communicating on website and posters. Take notes/ minutes during telephone call. |
| Resident Association and Neighbourhood Forums meetings (if required) via Zoom or telephone | See above open meeting dates via Zoom | Targeted meetings via Zoom meetings for RAs and NFs to explain, clarify, discuss the proposed modifications to the | Contact each RA/ NF prior to the consultation period to establish if a targeted meeting is required. |

| Consultation method | Date | Purpose | Tasks |
|---|---|--|--|
| | If necessary, targeted meetings for specific RAs/ NFs | Site Allocations DPD. | |
| Developer/Agents Forum meetings (if required) via Zoom or telephone | See above open meeting dates via Zoom If necessary, targeted meetings for Developers/ Agents | Targeted meetings to explain, clarify, discuss the proposed modifications to the Site Allocations DPD. | Contact Forum prior to the consultation period to establish if a targeted meeting is required. |
| Working Chamber of Commerce | Details above | Details above | Details above |
| Individual meetings with residents, landowners, agents and stakeholders via Zoom or telephone, as required. | Throughout consultation period | Raising awareness | Arrange Zoom meetings on request. |

Note

Since the adoption of the Core Strategy, the following Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) have been prepared and adopted with extensive public consultation:

- Parking Standards SPD – (2018)
- Climate Change SPD (2013)
- Affordable Housing SPD (2014)
- Hot Food Takeaway SPD – (2014)
- Design SPD (2015)
- CIL Charging Schedule (2014)
- Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Guidance Note (2018)

Shaping the future – how the spatial distribution of development has evolved

One of the important duties of the Council that is expected by the Government and local residents is to plan to meet the development needs of its diverse community in a sustainable manner. The Council has an adopted up to date Core Strategy that helps to achieve this aim.

The preparation of the Core Strategy started in 2009. In 2009, the Council spent a lot of time engaging with local residents and key stakeholders to understand and agree the issues that the community would like to be addressed and the challenges for addressing them. This exercise culminated in the publication of an Issues and Options document that was the subject of extensive consultation with the community between 27 October 2009 and 7 December 2009. There was broad consensus about the need for the Council to make provision for:

- Housing to meet the diverse needs of the community, in particular, Affordable Housing;
- High quality jobs; in particular, support for small and medium sized enterprise formation by encouraging a range of types and sizes of premises,
- Improved retail offer;
- Leisure and community facilities;
- Infrastructure and services to support development;
- Improved transport and accessibility;
- Measures to address and adapt to climate change and protect the environment and heritage assets.

There was a specific emphasis for the Council to provide direct investment to address pockets of deprivation that exists in neighbourhoods such as Sheerwater and the neighbouring Priority Areas of Maybury and the Lakeview Estate area of Goldsworth Park.

In parallel to this exercise, a significant amount of time was spent engaging with the community to understand the strengths and opportunities that exists to be mobilised to help address the identified issues. The prevailing weaknesses and threats were also identified to take into account. .

From 2009 to 2011, much time was spent gathering information, including carrying out numerous locally based studies to get much understanding on the scale and nature of the need that the community has identified. This included:

- Strategic Housing Market Assessment – to establish the scale and nature of housing need;
- Employment land review and employment topic paper – to determine the nature and scale of employment needs;
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment – to assess the capacity of the urban area to accommodate identified growth;
- Retail study – to assess the scale of retail growth that would be needed to support the economy

The studies revealed a need for about 594 dwellings per year, 28,000 sq.m of office floorspace, 20,000 sq.m of warehouse floorspace and 93,600 sq.m of retail floorspace

between 2010 and 2027. The study also demonstrated that given the constraints of the borough and the capacity of the urban area to accommodate growth, only 292 dwellings per year out of the total of 594 can be delivered. This proposition was submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination, and was accepted.

The above provided a useful basis and skeleton for the preparation of the Woking Core Strategy, which sets out the overall strategy for addressing the above issues in a sustainable manner and resolving some of the inherent conflicting implications for addressing the issues. For example, the policies for meeting housing and employment needs have significant transport and infrastructure implications that needs addressing too.

Right from the beginning, the Council understood that any strategy to address the issues will need a clear vision that gives an idea of how the borough would look and feel when everything has been achieved and the basis for measuring performance. A question was put out for discussion, which is – what would the community wish the Borough to look and feel like by 2027 when all the issues they have identified are delivered? Residents Forum, Developers Forum, Statutory Consultees, key stakeholders, Members and various sections of the Council were extensively engaged to develop and shape the vision. The vision that eventually commanded broad consensus was:

‘Woking will be a Borough of high environmental quality and standards where people choose to live, work and visit, an exemplar in the achievement of sustainable growth;

Woking will be a regional focus of economic prosperity centred on a vibrant, enhanced town centre that provides a good range of quality shops, jobs, cultural facilities, services and infrastructure to cater for the Borough’s needs, surrounded by distinct communities anchored by attractive district and local centres providing convenient access to everyday shops, services and local community facilities.

Woking will be a sustainable community where the benefits of growth and prosperity are shared throughout the Borough without pockets of deprivation.

New development in the Borough will be well designed to respect the character of the area. New housing development will help to meet the needs of all sections of the community.

A green Borough where people will have easy access to good quality green spaces and infrastructure for recreation and leisure.

The Borough will have a balanced and sustainable multi-modal transport system that links homes, jobs and key services and by doing so improve the overall health and well-being of all residents’

The twenty five policies of the Core Strategy were developed to enable the delivery of the vision, and they all have direct links to an aspect of the vision.

Given the quantum and nature and type of development that had been identified and needed, and the vision that was agreed, an important key issue that the Council had to work with the community to grapple with is where the quantum of development should be broadly located. Three options for the spatial distribution of the development were discussed with the

community, including Members, key stakeholders and the Resident Forum. The options were:

- Directing most new development to previously developed land in the town, district and local centres (particularly the own Centre) with minimum encroachment into the Green Belt as possible;
- Intensifying densities in the less dense areas of the Borough such as Hook Heath and Horsell;
- Significant extension into the Green Belt.

There was almost a unanimous agreement to focus most of the new development on previously development land in well designed, high density development that could include tall buildings within the Town Centre. A Town Centre specific policy was developed as a result. Of the quantum of development set out above, the following were identified to be provided at the Town Centre: 2,180 new homes, 27,000 sq.m of office floorspace and 75,300 sq.m of retail floorspace.

As demonstrated above, the policies of the Core Strategy had evolved between 2009 and 2012 when it was adopted with community involvement central to its preparation. The general thrust of what it seeks to achieve had broad community support. Formal consultation exercises included issues and options consultation between October and December 2009, Draft Core Strategy consultation between November 2010 and January 2011 and consultation on the Publication Document between July and September 2011. The Core Strategy was submitted for Examination in December 2011 with Examination Hearings between March and April 2012. It adopted in October 2012 and reviewed in October 2018. The Secretary of State agreed for the Council to make provision for the delivery of at least 292 dwellings per year against the housing need of 594 dwellings per year due to the identified constraints of the Borough. The separate attachment are Tables of how the community had been involved in the preparation of the various Local Development Documents.

The Council has since embarked upon the delivery of the Core Strategy and its vision. Some of the actions that have been achieved so far to enable the delivery of the Core Strategy include:

Infrastructure delivery - The Council has published an Infrastructure Delivery Plan setting out the nature, type and scale of infrastructure that would be needed to support the delivery of the Core Strategy, how it would be provided, by whom and at what cost. The delivery of the infrastructure is on-going, and much will also be delivered as site specific infrastructure when development proposals comes forward. This will be secured as part of development and/or developer contributions to enable provision. The following have been delivered or are being delivered.

- Significant investment to improve the environment of the Town Centre to make it an attractive place for businesses to locate and for people to live, work and visit. This include the landscaping of the Town Centre such as the public realm improvement at Victoria Square and Commercial Way to facilitate easy pedestrian access. This work is on-going, and the effects have been tangible and visible;

- Significant investment, about £25M to enhance sustainable transport measures such as walking and cycling and bus/rail interchange at the Town Centre;
- Partnership work with South Western Trains and Network Rail to provide a cycle Hub at Woking Station
- Investment in Green Infrastructure such as Heather Farm to connect people to Green Infrastructure and promote well-being. Work is on-going to bring forward the extended SANG land at Horsell Common and Brookwood Farm
- Improvements at the frontage of Wolsey Place and Peacocks to enhance the retail offer and create a vibrant customer experience, including market walk;
- Significant investment to expand the network of CHP infrastructure to help minimise the impact of development on climate change;
- The Government has awarded the Council £95M to replace Victoria Arch and improve the carriageway within the vicinity of the Arch. This significant infrastructure improvement will unlock the delivery of additional 3,300 dwellings at the Town Centre. 13 sites have been identified to accommodate the additional homes. Work on delivering the project has started. The project will also provide a good foundation for the delivery of significant rail infrastructure such as the Woking Flyover;
- In partnership with Surrey Heath and Runnymede Borough Councils, Runnymede BC has been awarded about £50M to improve traffic bottleneck along the A320 corridor.
- Highways England has accepted the proposed mitigation at the A245/Seven Hills Road Junction and has incorporated the proposals into their M25 J10/A3 scheme. The scheme has been accepted by the Planning Inspectorate for formal Examination and is subject to a Development Consent Order;

Preparation of Local Development Documents

The Council has embarked upon the preparation of a number of local development documents to enable the sustainable delivery of the Core Strategy. This includes:

- **Development Management Policies DPD.** This DPD was adopted in 2016 and provides detailed policies to enable day to day planning applications to be determined. It ensures that day to day planning applications are to acceptable standards as envisaged by the strategic policies of the Core Strategy;
- **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)** – A number of SPDs have been adopted to provide details guidance for the purposes of managing development across the Borough. This include Design SPD, Car and Cycle Parking Standards SPD, Climate Change SPD, Affordable Housing SPD, Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The Design SPD provides clear guidance for ensuring that tall buildings achieves high quality design and acceptable standards.
- **Site Allocations DPD** – the preparation of the Site Allocations DPD is near completion. It is going through Examination. The Examination Hearings were completed in December 2019. The schedule of Main Modifications was published for consultation between 18 September and 14 December 2020. The Site Allocations DPD identifies specific deliverable sites to enable the delivery of the quantum of development identified in the Core Strategy. The commitment to focus high density development on previously land in the Town Centre has been followed through in the DPD. About 44 different sites have been identified in the main centres, most of them in the Town Centre to meet development needs. This has ensured that a minimum

amount of land would be released from the Green Belt to meet housing need between 2020 and 2027. Overall, less than 2% of Green Belt land is proposed to be released to meet development needs. However, it should be noted that the less dense development at the Town Centre would be, the more Green Belt land that would be needed to meet the identified development needs. Based on all the available evidence, the following Green Belt sites have been identified as the most sustainable to meet the number, nature and type of homes needed between 2022 and 2027 without undermining the overall purposes and integrity of the Green Belt.:

- Land at West Hall (West Byfleet)
- Land at Broadoaks (West Byfleet)
- Land at Egley Road (Mayford)
- Land at Brookwood Lye Road (Brookwood)

Each allocation includes a set of key requirements to make sure that development impacts are appropriately assessed and any necessary measures of mitigation including site specific infrastructure are introduced to address potential adverse impacts.

Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) - The Government has awarded the Council £95M to replace Victoria Arch and improve the transport network within its vicinity. This significant infrastructure improvement will unlock the delivery of additional 3,300 dwellings at the Town Centre. 13 sites have been identified to accommodate the additional homes. The HIF award will be part of the Big Conversation.

Built Development (housing, retail, commercial, social and community facilities and other town centre uses) – The above provides a good basis for the built development to be brought forward. It is likely that the development would comprise of varying heights of tall buildings. The Victoria Square development is a model of a tall building to demonstrate what could be achieved at the Town Centre.

At this stage it would be very difficult to speculate with precision how development on the various sites would look like across the Town Centre. The Town Centre Masterplan that the Council is preparing will provide guidance on this.

Woking is a compact urban area tightly surrounded by the Green Belt. The Council is acutely aware that when the community agreed to focus most new development at the Town Centre, it did so with the understanding that it will be of high quality design. In this regard, the Council is investing significant amount of money and effort to achieve this goal. It has published a Design SPD and a Character Study to ensure development achieves high quality design, set up a Design Panel of experts to scrutinise development proposals when they come forward for determination, invested in VU-City to enhance understanding on how development would look in its context and is investing in design training of Officers. Every bit of action that the Council is taking is intending to deliver the vision that the community has already agreed. The Council is not complaisant, it will continue to monitor its actions, and review underlying evidence to make sure that new information is constantly fed into the delivery of the vision. That underlying evidence includes a conversation with the community about their views on how the Town Centre should look and feel by 2030. The Town Centre Masterplan will provide an opportunity to understand what the community wish for the area.

EXECUTIVE – 15 JULY 2021

EQUALITIES ANNUAL REPORT - 2021

Executive Summary

This annual report seeks to inform the Executive of progress on the equalities agenda. It covers the period April 2020 to March 2021. The Equality Act 2010 brought together, harmonised and in some cases extended previous equality law. The aim of the legislation is to make it more consistent, clearer and easier to follow in order to make society fairer. The Act also sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on 5 April 2011. The Equality Duty ensures that all public bodies, including local authorities, play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all.

The Equality Duty covers the following protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Duty requires the Council to have 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Having 'due regard' means consciously thinking about the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision making. This means that consideration of equality issues must influence the decisions reached by the Council, e.g. how it acts as an employer, how it develops, evaluates and reviews policies, how it designs, delivers and evaluates services and how it commissions and procures from others.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

the report be received.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To meet the requirement to report on annual progress on the equality agenda.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers: [Corporate Equality Scheme](#)
Sustainability Impact Assessment
Equalities Impact Assessment

Reporting Person: Julie Fisher, Chief Executive
Email: julie.fisher@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3333

Contact Person: Refeia Zaman, Senior Policy Officer
Email: refeia.zaman@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3479

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ayesha Azad
Email: cllrayesha.azad@woking.gov.uk

Shadow Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ann-Marie Barker
Email: cllrann-marie.barker@woking.gov.uk

Date Published: 7 July 2021

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Woking Borough Council believes that the diversity of its population and workforce is one of its greatest strengths. Equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination is a fundamental right and this Council has a duty to exercise leadership to promote this right. The Council intends to promote equality and prevent discrimination through its roles as service provider, employer and community leader.
- 1.2 The Council will follow best practice in all equality areas and work to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not; and
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 1.3 From April 2011 the Equality Act 2010 brought together all previous equality legislation and gave full protection to eight protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Some aspect of the legislation also covers marriage and civil partnership.
- 1.4 Success in mainstreaming equalities in the organisation is measured by The Equality Framework for Local Government, which was adopted by the authority in March 2009. The Framework is based on three levels of achievement, developing, achieving and excellent. The Council has been successfully verified by external assessment at 'Achieving' level.
- 1.5 Over the 12 months covered by this report the Pandemic has obviously had unprecedented effects on the Council as a service provider, community leader and employer. The priority of service provision was to support the most vulnerable members of our community and ensure they were safe and well. As community leader, the Council played a key role in the emergency response to the pandemic and ensuring the safety of its residents. As an employer many people had to adjust to working from home for some or all of their working time. Employee support and wellbeing was paramount.

2.0 Progress

- 2.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty (specific duties) requires all public bodies to:
- Annually publish information that shows how they have complied with the Equality Duty. This was published on the Council website in January.
 - Set equality objectives for the organisation. Overarching objectives have been developed which are relevant to each of the equality groups covered by the Equality Act. They relate back to the General Duty and are designed to ensure a holistic approach to tackling inequality and promoting equality through the organisation and Borough. (attached Appendix 1)
- 2.2 The Equality and Wellbeing Working Group met quarterly, monitoring progress on the equality and wellbeing agenda. Due to the pandemic the Group did not meet last year but will resume meetings this year.
- 2.3 A comprehensive programme of equality and wellbeing awareness has taken place over the year, covering issues such as wellbeing whilst working from home, mental health awareness, again focusing on the impact of the pandemic and lockdown. Our annual campaigns, e.g. around homophobia, gender equality, men's health and carers took place on-line, including

ewok+ and the Council's social media pages. A wellbeing section was created for the Covid response pages, ensuring up to date information was available to all. Weekly Health & Wellbeing emails were sent out, giving advice, tips and ensuring moral was maintained. On-line training was providing on topics such as working from home, coping with the stresses of the pandemic and building resilience. Employee surveys were carried out to gauge the impact of the pandemic on working life.

- 2.4 A pilot course was run on Building Resilience, ensuring individuals and teams have the skills and knowledge to look after their own health and wellbeing, cope with of their work and that of their teams and ensure a healthy work-life balance. Feedback from the pilot was positive, changes were made and follow-up sessions were run with one of the Family Support teams. This will be evaluated, with a view to rolling out to other teams in the organisation. This will be important over the coming months as we transition to the new hybrid way of working in the future.
- 2.5 In addition monthly health and wellbeing themes have also been highlighted on ewok+, offering helpful advice and tips on how to look after yourself and effectively manage life and work, especially in the current situation. Themes have included healthy heart, benefits of walking, diabetes awareness and men's health. Advice is also provided on how to achieve good mental health and wellbeing, including dealing with stress and obtaining a better work-life balance. The organisation has 8 trained Mental Health First Aiders and the Employee Assistance Programme is promoted regularly.
- 2.6 The equality agenda has been successfully mainstreamed throughout the organisation and the Council's priority is to ensure accessible services are available to the vulnerable sections of the local communities. A large proportion of the work over the last year has focused on supporting communities, local residents, businesses and employees through the pandemic. (See Appendix 2)
- 2.7 Working relationships with community groups, providing support to those protected by equality legislation, continue to be developed. The focus of the past 12 months was to ensure that groups could move their support and services on-line to continue providing the vital assistance to some of the most vulnerable sections of our communities. This was done extremely successfully and we should really be proud of the voluntary sector organisations in our Borough and the lifelines they provide.
- 2.8 Equality monitoring figures are produced annually for employment, looking at areas such as workforce profile, appointments, training, promotion and discipline and grievance issues. These are broken down according to race, gender, disability, age, sexuality and religion and belief. These are detailed in Appendix 3.
- 2.9 From 6 April 2017 employers in Great Britain with more than 250 staff are required by law to publish annually its gender pay gap (mean and median averages) and the proportion of men and women in each quartile of the organisation's pay structure.
- 2.10 This year's report, covering the 12 months up to 31st March 2020, showed that the Council has a mean gender pay gap of 19.28% and a median gender pay gap of 10.24%. The mean gender pay gap nationally is now 15.5% according to the October 2020 Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) figures. The main reason for Woking's gap is an imbalance of male and female colleagues across the organisation, the roles in which men and women work within the organisation and the salaries that these roles attract.
- 2.11 The Council is committed to reducing its gender pay gap and an action plan has been developed to look at how best to achieve this, including carrying out further analysis of pay, reviewing recruitment processes, promoting flexible working options and development opportunities. The full report and action plan can be accessed at

<https://www.woking.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Jobs/Pay%20Policy%20Statement%202020-21%20and%20Gender%20Pay%20Gap%20Data.pdf>

3.0 Future Plans

- 3.1 Across the organisation a huge amount of work is done to address the needs of the most vulnerable sections of the local communities and the equalities agenda has successfully been mainstreamed into service plans. In the current climate of scarce resources, partnership working with the statutory and voluntary sectors is increasingly important.
- 3.2 Building the capacity of local voluntary and community organisations to support this is an essential part of ensuring this happens. The current pandemic crisis has highlighted the excellent work that can be done with partnership working to ensure the most vulnerable in our community are supported. The recovery will not be easy and there will be individuals, groups and businesses needing support for the foreseeable future. Employees also provided vital support throughout and again it is important to ensure all are supported in making the adjustments required going forward. Opportunities have also been created on how to work more effectively and efficiently going forward and a new Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) has taken the lead at Woking so things are looking positive.

4.0 Corporate Strategy

- 4.1 The equalities and well-being agenda ensures we meet our legal obligations under Equality legislation. Ensuring we have a healthy and flexible workforce which is able to meet the demands of service provision to some of the most vulnerable sections of our communities, including improving the health and wellbeing of all residents, reducing social inequality and engaging our communities. Strengthening partnership working is essential to this process, ensuring scarce resources are used to maximum effect.

5.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 5.1 Equality work is mainstreamed into annual Service Plans and budgets allocated accordingly. In addition external funding is identified for specific projects as and when required.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 5.2 Equality and Wellbeing Training is provided through Surrey Learn, a partnership of all Surrey local authorities. Internal awareness campaigns and training take place throughout the year. A Member awareness session is held annually.

Legal

- 5.3 The report ensures the organisation meets its legislative requirements under equalities legislation, including the Public Sector Equality Duty and outlines annual progress on the equality and wellbeing agenda.

6.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 6.1 Recovering from the pandemic, narrowing equality gaps and improving the life chances of different groups will require a pooling of evidence, resources and action planning. Working in partnership with the statutory, voluntary and community sectors will become increasingly important. Building and supporting the capacity of the voluntary/community sectors to enable this will be essential. The Council will have to become smarter at engaging and involving communities of interest in decision making, service and workforce planning, particularly

groups who may experience disadvantage and inequality; the Big Conversation will aid this process .

REPORT ENDS

Equality Objectives:

Overarching objectives that have been developed for the council's Corporate Equality Scheme which are relevant to each of the nine equality groups covered by the Equality Act, relate back to the General Duty and are designed to ensure a holistic approach to tackling inequality and promoting equality through the organisation. The overarching objectives are to:

Tackle victimisation, harassment and discrimination

Take reasonable steps to ensure that residents, service users and employees are not unlawfully discriminated against and take appropriate action to prevent & tackle victimisation and harassment.

Improve access to services

Take reasonable steps to ensure that services are inclusive, responsive to risk, physically accessible and provided through the most efficient and effective channels available.

Close the gap in outcomes for citizens

Take reasonable steps to improve life chances for citizens by reducing outcome gaps that may exist within the Borough as well as those that may exist between the Borough and elsewhere.

Increase understanding and mutual respect between communities

Take reasonable steps to build stronger communities and promote good relations, both within and between communities.

Increase participation and engagement

Take reasonable steps to remove barriers that may exist to engagement and help residents (especially those who are under-represented) to participate in local decision making and influence local decisions.

Ensure equitable employment policies and practices

Provide equality of opportunity for all Council staff by ensuring all employment policies and practices, (concerning recruitment, retention, promotion, training and discipline), are designed to reflect and attract the communities that Woking serves.

Equality actions/achievements: 2020/21:

A significant part of the work covering this period involved the Council's emergency response to the pandemic.

Staff re-deployed to support the frontline – 143

158,000 messages delivered via social media, email, print and broadcast.

Phone calls made to vulnerable & shielding residents - 2370.

Residents given support and advice via our helpline - 1156 calls

Prescriptions delivered – 575

Community meals delivered – 85588 meals

Pieces of PPE handed out - 70,120

Volunteers signed up to offer their help - 977

Emergency accommodation provided – 161

Households provided with council tax support – 4188

Supporting businesses with advice on re-opening following lockdown, including small businesses, community centres etc.

Supporting with contact tracing.

Support follow up on an outbreak relating to a variant of concern, which led to targeted testing of a population of Eastern European employees.

Support surge testing.

Secure vaccinations of Hepatitis A at a local traveller site where an outbreak was identified.

Interfaith work via, Woking People of Faith, Surrey Muslim Association and bespoke engagement with Shah Jahan Mosque

Armed Forces Covenant – Armed Forces panel driven work in supporting the forces community in Woking and engagement with Army Training centre, Pirbright, 11 infantry brigade, Aldershot and helping to establish a Veterans Hub in Woking as well as working with SERFCA.

WBC achieved MOD's Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award in 2020.

Community engagement work with residents in Sheerwater, eg. gardening and time capsule.

Appendix 3

Equalities Monitoring Data for the period 1/4/2020 – 31/3/2021

1. *Breakdown of all employees by:

*These figures are based on 447 employees; this includes all employees all on the payroll including casual employees who may only work very occasionally.

a) Ethnic background

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Asian/ Asian British | 40 |
| Black/Black British | 14 |
| Chinese/Other | 4 |
| Mixed | 4 |
| White | 341 |
| Gypsy/Traveller | 1 |
| Romany Gypsy | 0 |
| Irish Traveller | 0 |
| Other (please specify) | 31 |
| Not Known | 8 |
| Prefer not to say | 4 |

b) Gender

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Male | 155 |
| Female | 292 |
| Transgender | 0 |
| Prefer not to say | 0 |

c) Declaration of Disability

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Yes | 21 |
| No | 407 |
| Prefer not to say | 14 |
| Not known | 5 |

d) Age

| | |
|----------|-----|
| Under 25 | 20 |
| 25 - 34 | 69 |
| 35 - 44 | 109 |
| 45 - 54 | 115 |
| 55 - 64 | 109 |
| Over 65 | 25 |

e) Sexual orientation

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Heterosexual/Straight | 294 |
| Bisexual | 3 |
| Gay or Lesbian | 5 |
| Prefer not to say | 16 |
| Not Known | 129 |

f) Religion

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Christian | 218 |
| Buddhist | 2 |
| Hindu | 8 |
| Jewish | 2 |
| Muslim | 34 |
| Sikh | 2 |
| No Religion | 147 |
| Other (Please specify) | 4 |
| Not Known | 7 |
| Prefer not to say | 23 |

2. How many people belonging to each group applied to the Council for employment during the period?

a) Ethnic background

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Asian/ Asian British | 202 |
| Black/Black British | 91 |
| Chinese/Other | 11 |
| Mixed | 42 |
| White | 704 |
| Gypsy/Traveller | 0 |
| Romany Gypsy | 0 |
| Irish Traveller | 0 |
| Other (please specify) | 28 |
| Not Known | 31 |
| Prefer not to say | 20 |

b) Gender

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Male | 420 |
| Female | 670 |
| Transgender | 2 |
| Prefer not to say | 8 |
| Not known | 29 |

c) Declaration of Disability

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| Yes | 32 |
| No | 1093 |
| Not known | 1 |
| Prefer not to say | 3 |

d) Age

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Under 25 | 213 |
| 25 - 34 | 380 |
| 35 - 44 | 265 |
| 45 - 54 | 164 |
| 55 - 64 | 77 |
| Over 65 | 6 |
| Not Known | 24 |

e) Sexual orientation

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Heterosexual/Straight | 976 |
| Bisexual | 21 |
| Gay or Lesbian | 35 |
| Prefer not to say | 59 |
| Not Known | 38 |

f) Religion

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Christian | 412 |
| Buddhist | 22 |
| Hindu | 42 |
| Jewish | 3 |
| Muslim | 119 |
| Sikh | 24 |
| No Religion | 400 |
| Other (Please specify) | 27 |
| Not Known | 18 |
| Prefer not to say | 62 |

3. How many people belonging to each group applied for/received training during the period?

a) Ethnic background

| | |
|-------|----|
| BME | 20 |
| White | 78 |

b) Gender

| | |
|-------------|----|
| Male | 30 |
| Female | 48 |
| Transgender | 0 |

c) Declaration of Disability

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | 3 |
| No | 75 |

d) Age

| | |
|----------|----|
| Under 25 | 4 |
| 25 - 34 | 24 |
| 35 - 44 | 28 |
| 45 - 54 | 21 |
| 55 - 64 | 20 |
| Over 65 | 1 |

4. How many people belonging to each group were promoted during the period?

a) Ethnic background

| | |
|-------|---|
| BME | 1 |
| White | 8 |

b) Gender

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Male | 4 |
| Female | 5 |
| Transgender | 0 |

c) Declaration of Disability

| | |
|-----|---|
| Yes | 0 |
| No | 9 |

d) Age

| | |
|----------|---|
| Under 25 | 0 |
| 25 - 34 | 0 |
| 35 - 44 | 5 |
| 45 - 54 | 3 |
| 55 - 64 | 1 |
| Over 65 | 0 |

5. How many people belonging to each group "benefited or suffered detriment as a result of formal performance assessment procedures"?

There were no formal assessment procedures carried out during the period.

6. How many people belonging to each group were involved in grievance procedures?

There were no formal grievances during the period.

7. How many people belonging to each group were the subjects of disciplinary procedures?

There were no formal disciplinary procedures during the period.

8. How many people belonging to each group ceased employment with the Council during the period?

a) Ethnic background

| | |
|------------------------|----|
| Asian/ Asian British | 11 |
| Black/Black British | 1 |
| Chinese/Other | 0 |
| Mixed | 1 |
| White | 52 |
| Not Known | 1 |
| Gypsy/Traveller | 1 |
| Romany Gypsy | 0 |
| Irish Traveller | 0 |
| Other (please specify) | 0 |
| Prefer not to say | 0 |

b) Gender

| | |
|-------------|----|
| Male | 25 |
| Female | 42 |
| Transgender | 0 |

c) Declaration of Disability

| | |
|-------------------|----|
| Yes | 4 |
| No | 60 |
| Prefer not to say | 3 |

d) Age

| | |
|----------|----|
| Under 25 | 6 |
| 25 - 34 | 15 |
| 35 - 44 | 14 |
| 45 - 54 | 8 |
| 55 - 64 | 15 |
| Over 65 | 9 |

9. Flexible Working Requests:

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| Number received | 14 |
| Number agreed | 14 |
| Success rate | 100 |

10. Return to work from maternity

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Number taking maternity leave | 9 |
| Number returned to work | 7 |
| Success rate | 77% |

EXECUTIVE – 15 JULY 2021

TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

Executive Summary

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management has been adopted by the Council and the Council fully complies with its requirements.

Primary requirements of the Code include: the receipt by the Council of an annual strategy report for the year ahead; monitoring and scrutiny during the year which Council has agreed will be satisfied through the regular Treasury reporting in the Green Book and a mid year report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and an annual report of the previous year. The mid year and annual report are important in scrutiny, as they provide details of the treasury activities and demonstrate compliance with the Council's Treasury Management strategy and policies previously approved by Members.

These overall arrangements fulfil the requirements for the review and scrutiny of Treasury activities and ensure compliance with the Code.

The Council borrows to fund capital investment in assets including property and infrastructure projects. The assets created provide a benefit over many years and the borrowing is repaid over the life of the asset.

During 2020/21 the Council borrowed £195m in long term loans from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLb). All of these loans were annuity loans where the principal is repaid in instalments during the term of the loan. No maturity loans were taken (where the principal is repaid at the end of the loan and funds set aside each year to enable this). All long term loans were fixed rate for 50 years. The interest rates for the annuity loans were between 1.68% and 2.48%.

The Council net assets (total assets less total liabilities including borrowing) will be reported to Council as part of the Statement of Accounts which are currently being finalised.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

the annual report on Treasury Management performance for 2020/21 be received, and the compliance with the Council's approved arrangements be noted.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To receive the annual report on Treasury Management performance for 2020/21 in accordance with the Council's policy on Treasury Management.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Leigh Clarke, Finance Director
Email: leigh.clarke@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3277

Contact Person: Neil Haskell, Financial Services Manager
Email: neil.haskell@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3246

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Simon Ashall
Email: cllrsimon.ashall@woking.gov.uk

Shadow Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ian Johnson
Email: cllrian.johnson@woking.gov.uk

Date Published: 7 July 2021

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Treasury management is defined as:-

“The management of the local authority’s investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.”

1.2 This annual treasury report covers:

- the economy in 2020/21;
- the strategy for 2020/21;
- the actual borrowing for 2020/21;
- performance measurement;
- the Council’s treasury position as at 31st March 2021;
- restructuring of borrowing;
- compliance with treasury limits and Prudential Indicators;
- investment activity in 2020/21; and
- loans and advances to group companies and joint ventures.

1.3 This Council is required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2020/21. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, (the Code), and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, (the Prudential Code).

2.0 The Economy

2.1 The first national lockdown in late March 2020 did huge damage to an economy that was unprepared for such an eventuality. This caused an economic downturn that exceeded the one caused by the financial crisis of 2008/09. A short second lockdown in November did relatively little damage but by the time of the third lockdown in January 2021, businesses and individuals had become more resilient in adapting to working in new ways during a three month lockdown so much less damage than was caused than in the first one. The advent of vaccines starting in November 2020 has been instrumental in speeding economic recovery and the reopening of the economy. It is expected that the UK economy could recover its pre-pandemic level of economic activity during quarter 1 of 2022.

2.2 The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) cut the Bank Rate from 0.75% to 0.25% and then to 0.10% in March 2020 and embarked on a £200bn programme of quantitative easing (QE). The MPC then increased QE by £100bn in June and by £150bn in November. While Bank Rate remained unchanged for the rest of the year, financial markets were concerned that the MPC could cut Bank Rate to a negative rate; this was firmly discounted at the February 2021 MPC meeting when it was established that commercial banks would be unable to implement negative rates for at least six months – by which time the economy was expected to be making a strong recovery and negative rates would no longer be needed.

2.3 The Bank of England changed its forward guidance in August to include a new phrase in the policy statement, namely that “it does not intend to tighten monetary policy until there is clear evidence that significant progress is being made in eliminating spare capacity and achieving the 2% target sustainably.” This suggests that even if inflation rises to 2% in a couple of years’ time, the MPC may not raise the Bank Rate until they can clearly see that level of inflation is going to be persistently above target. This sets a high bar for raising Bank Rate and no increase is expected by March 2024, and possibly for as long as five years. Inflation

has been well under 2% during 2020/21; it is expected to briefly peak at just over 2% towards the end of 2021, but this is a temporary short lived factor and so not a concern to the MPC.

3.0 The Council's Treasury Strategy for 2020/21

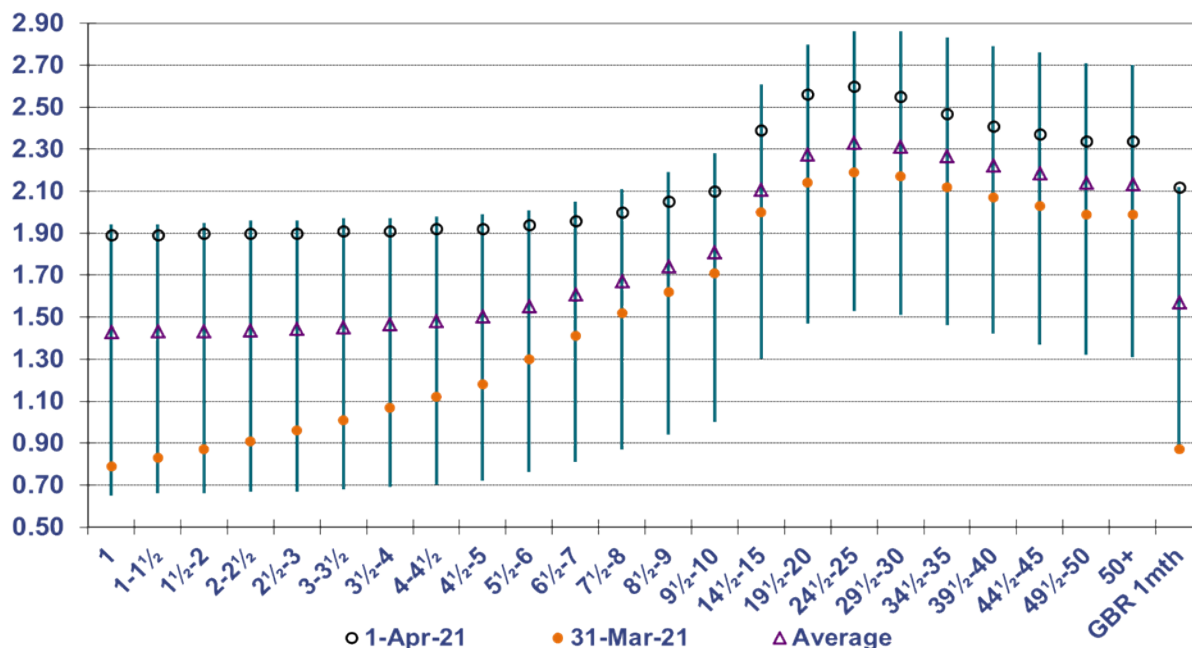
Borrowing

- 3.1 In 2020/21, the Council largely undertook borrowing for periods which aligned with the life of projects/assets being undertaken during that financial year. The trigger point below which new long term borrowing would be considered was set at 3.30% to 3.60% for fixed rate long term borrowing in the Treasury Management Strategy. Annuity loans were taken during 2020/21 for which the 50 year borrowing rate equates to the rate available on a 30 year maturity loan. Consideration was also to be given to borrowing fixed rate market loans at 25 to 50 basis points below the PWLB target rate if they became available.
- 3.2 The Council's underlying need to borrow for capital expenditure is termed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This figure is a gauge of the Council's indebtedness and includes leasing schemes (such as the PFI scheme which increased the Council's borrowing need) less the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP – the provision set aside for debt repayment), group company loan repayments and lease repayments. The change in the CFR and MRP set aside for 2020/21 will be reported to Council as part of the Statement of Accounts which are currently being finalised.
- 3.3 The Council's investment priorities were set as the security of capital and the liquidity of its investments whilst aiming to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity. The risk appetite of this Council to Treasury Management is low in order to give priority to security of its investments.

4.0 Actual Borrowing in 2020/21

- 4.1 The graph below shows the range (high, low and average points) in Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) fixed rate maturity loan interest rates for each maturity period during the year, and individual rates at the start and end of the financial year.
- 4.2 During 2020/21, the Council took 50 year annuity loans. Annuity loans taken were at rates ranging between 1.68% and 2.48%, compared to a high point of 2.86% for 50 year annuity loans during the year.

PWLB Certainty Rate Variations 1.4.20 to 31.3.2021



- 4.3 In November 2020 HM Treasury announced revised lending terms for the PWLB. Rates were reduced by 1% under the new arrangements but the PWLB will no longer lend to any Local Authority which plans to buy investment assets primarily for yield (regardless of whether this purchase would be funded by PWLB borrowing or through other resources). Following the announcement the Council's Capital Programme was reviewed by the s151 Officer and a return provided to the PWLB and HM Treasury confirming that Woking complies with these new rules and is able to access PWLB Borrowing.
- 4.4 It was recognised in the Treasury Management Strategy in advance of the financial year that there were likely to be opportunities to generate savings by undertaking short term borrowing. A mix of short term and long term borrowing was undertaken during the year to derive some benefit from the lower rates. Short-term borrowing was particularly favoured in the months before the announcement on the new PWLB lending terms as these terms offered the prospect of lower long term rates. A larger proportion of long term borrowing was taken from November onwards in recognition of the possibility of adverse interest rate movements prior to refinancing. Whilst borrowing is not generally specifically related to an activity (with the exception of the Victoria Square project), a level of short term borrowing is maintained to cover short dated projects.
- 4.5 Underspends on interest costs in 2020/21 are also due to assumed strategic property acquisitions not completing. The under spend is therefore offset by a £5m shortfall on commercial rent income.
- 4.6 The details of new long term loans taken during the year are shown below, with the maturity 'profile' for all loans in Appendix 2.

| Loan Type | Start Date | Maturity Date | Interest Rate (%) | Principal (£m) |
|-------------------|------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|
| PWLB Annuity Loan | 16/04/2020 | 16/04/2070 | 2.48 | 20.0 |
| PWLB Annuity Loan | 12/05/2020 | 12/05/2070 | 2.43 | 20.0 |
| PWLB Annuity Loan | 18/01/2021 | 18/01/2071 | 1.71 | 10.0 |
| PWLB Annuity Loan | 21/01/2021 | 21/01/2071 | 1.71 | 20.0 |

Treasury Management Annual Report 2020-21

| | | | | |
|-------------------|------------|------------|------|------|
| PWLB Annuity Loan | 29/01/2021 | 29/01/2071 | 1.68 | 20.0 |
| PWLB Annuity Loan | 15/02/2021 | 15/02/2071 | 1.87 | 15.0 |
| PWLB Annuity Loan | 02/03/2021 | 02/03/2071 | 2.15 | 45.0 |
| PWLB Annuity Loan | 04/03/2021 | 04/03/2071 | 2.15 | 20.0 |
| PWLB Annuity Loan | 25/03/2021 | 25/03/2071 | 2.13 | 10.0 |
| PWLB Annuity Loan | 26/03/2021 | 26/03/2071 | 2.09 | 15.0 |

5.0 Performance

5.1 The average rate of interest is taken as the main guide to borrowing performance. In 2020/21 the Council's average interest rate for borrowing was 2.62%. This is lower than the average rate in 2019/20 of 2.90%.

6.0 Treasury Management Position at 31st March 2021

6.1 The Council's borrowing and investment position at the beginning and end of the year is shown in the following table:

| Borrowing | 31 st March 2021 | | | | 31 st March 2020 | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|------|-----------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| | Principal (£m) | Rate | Average Life (Years) | | Principal (£m) | Rate | Average Life (Years) |
| Fixed Rate Funding | | | | | | | |
| PWLB | 1,454.6 | | | | 1,283.8 | | |
| Market (long term) | 39.5 | | | | 39.5 | | |
| Market (short term) | 187 | | | | 55.0 | | |
| | | 1,681.1 | 2.75% | 39.3 | 1,378.3 | 2.80% | 41.31 |
| Variable Rate Funding | | | | | | | |
| Appeal Deposits | | 0.0 | 0.01% | n/a | 0.0 | 0.01% | n/a |
| Total Borrowing | | 1,681.1 | 2.75% | | 1,378.3 | 2.80% | |

| Investments | 31 st March 2021 | | | | 31 st March 2020 | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| | Principal (£m) | Rate | Average Life (Years) | | Principal (£m) | Rate | Average Life (Years) |
| In-House | 9.0 | 0.01% | 0.0 | | 10.0 | 0.41% | 0.0 |
| Total Investments | 9.0 | 0.01% | | | 10.0 | 0.41% | |

7.0 Restructuring of Borrowing

- 7.1 No restructuring of borrowing took place during 2020/21.

8.0 Compliance with Treasury Limits

- 8.1 During the financial year, the Council operated within the treasury limits and Prudential Indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Policy Statement and annual Treasury Strategy Statement. The outturn for the Prudential Indicators is shown in Appendix 1.

9.0 Investment Activity in 2020/21

- 9.1 Priority continues to be given to security and liquidity over return on investment in order to reduce counterparty risk.

Internally Managed Investments

- 9.2 The Council has only invested with the institutions on its approved lending list. Investments are made for a range of periods from overnight to 364 days, primarily to manage the Council's cash flow.
- 9.3 Due to continuing low investment rates, the Council's cash flow surplus was largely held in money market funds. These offer security, instant access and rates which were comparable with those available in the money markets for short periods.
- 9.4 Given the level of cash available during the year, no investments were managed on external advice.
- 9.5 No external institutions in which investments were made had any difficulty in repaying investments and interest in full during the year.

10.0 Loans and Advances to Group Companies, Joint Ventures and External Organisations

- 10.1 During the year new loans were made of £2.5m to Thamesway Central Milton Keynes, £26.7m to Thamesway Housing Ltd, £4.7 to Thamesway Developments Ltd (£2.7m relating to Sheerwater Leisure Centre), £25.6m to Thamesway Housing Ltd (relating to Sheerwater Regeneration), £22.4m to Thamesway Energy Ltd, £0.2m to Freedom Leisure, £0.6m to Woking Hospice (being accrued interest on the existing loan) and £174.4m to Victoria Square Ltd. These loans are included in the monthly monitoring information (Green Book).
- 10.2 Intra-group loans are excluded from the information presented elsewhere in this report. Loans to subsidiaries are 'eliminated' on consolidation into group accounts.
- 10.3 No capitalisation (share) payments were made in 2020/21.

11.0 Corporate Strategy

- 11.1 The Council has a statutory obligation to carry out this report. In order to comply with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management, an annual report on the Council's treasury management is required.
- 11.2 The review of treasury management activities encourages effective use of resources.

12.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

12.1 The financial implications are implicit in the body of this report.

Equalities and Human Resources

12.2 There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report.

12.3 The contract with Link Asset Services provides for staff attendance at various conferences and seminars throughout the year, as well as providing a helpline facility.

Legal

12.4 Treasury management activities have to conform to the Local Government Act 2003, which specifies that the Council is required to adopt the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice. The Council is required to produce an annual treasury management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2020/21. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, (the Code), and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, (the Prudential Code).

13.0 Engagement and Consultation

13.1 No consultations have been undertaken in connection with this report.

REPORT ENDS

| TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS | 2020/21 Budget £'000 | Actual March 2021 £'000 |
|--|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Authorised limit for external borrowing | | |
| Borrowing | 2,048,271 | 1,681,068 |
| Other long term liabilities (PFI) | 24,676 | 25,667 |
| TOTAL | 2,072,947 | 1,706,735 |
| Operational boundary for external borrowing | | |
| Borrowing | 2,038,271 | 1,681,068 |
| other long term liabilities (PFI) | 24,676 | 25,667 |
| TOTAL | 2,062,947 | 1,706,735 |
| Upper limit for fixed interest rate exposure | 100% | 100% |
| Upper limit for variable rate exposure | 70% | 0% |
| Upper limit for total principal sums invested for over 365 days (per maturity date) | £3,000,000 | 0 |

| Maturity structure of fixed rate borrowing during 2020/21 | Upper limit | Lower limit | Actual |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| under 12 months | 100% | 0% | 13.2% |
| 12 months and within 24 months | 100% | 0% | 0.0% |
| 24 months and within 5 years | 100% | 0% | 1.3% |
| 5 years and within 10 years | 100% | 0% | 0.6% |
| 10 years and within 20 years | 100% | 0% | 2.5% |
| 20 years and within 30 years | 100% | 0% | 0.4% |
| 30 years and within 40 years | 100% | 0% | 12.6% |
| 40 years and within 50 years | 100% | 0% | 68.1% |
| 50 years and above | 100% | 0% | 1.5% |

The maturity structure of fixed rate borrowing table includes both annuity and maturity loans, and is based on the final repayment date for that loan. It should be noted however that the principal on annuity loans is repaid over the life of the loan, and not just on the maturity date. At the end of 2020/21, £435.5m was held in PWLB maturity loans and £1,019m in PWLB annuity loans.

| Financial Year | Principal Repayment £'000 |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| 2021/2022 | 236,948,987.26 |
| 2022/2023 | 12,150,129.89 |
| 2023/2024 | 12,443,262.27 |
| 2024/2025 | 21,743,601.50 |
| 2025/2026 | 21,051,327.81 |
| 2026/2027 | 16,366,626.03 |
| 2027/2028 | 13,505,833.42 |
| 2028/2029 | 13,832,819.23 |
| 2029/2030 | 14,167,871.82 |
| 2030/2031 | 19,511,193.61 |
| 2031/2032 | 19,862,992.13 |
| 2032/2033 | 15,223,480.38 |
| 2033/2034 | 20,592,876.49 |
| 2034/2035 | 25,918,050.17 |
| 2035/2036 | 21,249,614.42 |
| 2036/2037 | 21,643,016.20 |
| 2037/2038 | 20,046,104.16 |
| 2038/2039 | 22,459,120.31 |
| 2039/2040 | 20,882,312.83 |
| 2040/2041 | 23,315,935.95 |
| 2041/2042 | 18,760,250.49 |
| 2042/2043 | 22,215,523.97 |
| 2043/2044 | 19,682,030.59 |
| 2044/2045 | 20,160,051.24 |
| 2045/2046 | 20,649,874.50 |
| 2046/2047 | 21,151,795.72 |
| 2047/2048 | 21,666,118.00 |
| 2048/2049 | 22,193,152.04 |
| 2049/2050 | 25,733,216.53 |
| c/f | 785,127,169 |

| Financial Year | Principal Repayment £'000 |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| b/f | 785,127,169 |
| 2050/2051 | 23,286,638.12 |
| 2051/2052 | 23,853,751.80 |
| 2052/2053 | 28,434,901.02 |
| 2053/2054 | 38,030,438.03 |
| 2054/2055 | 40,640,724.04 |
| 2055/2056 | 34,266,129.30 |
| 2056/2057 | 42,907,033.55 |
| 2057/2058 | 43,563,826.24 |
| 2058/2059 | 63,236,906.62 |
| 2059/2060 | 69,926,684.14 |
| 2060/2061 | 54,633,578.53 |
| 2061/2062 | 68,364,020.60 |
| 2062/2063 | 39,100,451.64 |
| 2063/2064 | 39,861,324.46 |
| 2064/2065 | 61,141,103.31 |
| 2065/2066 | 51,440,264.29 |
| 2066/2067 | 83,259,295.61 |
| 2067/2068 | 42,322,295.05 |
| 2068/2069 | 39,054,949.78 |
| 2069/2070 | 10,403,533.66 |
| 2070/2071 | 6,474,455.42 |
| 2071/2072 | 489,780.17 |
| 2072/2073 | 0.00 |
| 2073/2074 | 0.00 |
| 2074/2075 | 0.00 |
| 2075/2076 | 0.00 |
| 2076/2077 | 20,000,000.00 |
| 2077/2078 | 5,000,000.00 |
| Total | 1,714,819,254 |

The above table shows projected loan principal repayments in each financial year as at June 2021.

Principal on annuity loans is repaid over the life of the loan and each repayment is included in the relevant financial year.

Full details of loans and maturity dates can be found in the monthly Green Book Financial Monitoring information.

EXECUTIVE – 15 JULY 2021

RISK MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY ANNUAL REPORT

Executive Summary

Risk Management and Business Continuity Management are the two main disciplines through which the Council identifies, manages and mitigates its business and operational risks. An annual report is submitted to the Executive to outline any activities or issues that have occurred.

Corporate Strategic Risks have been reviewed and updated by CLT since the last annual report, and the risks that have been identified have been logged and owners allocated. The management of Service Plan risks will recommence in September this year, during which all risks at this level will be reviewed and updated.

Work to update the Risk Management Strategy is underway, and will be submitted to the Executive in September for review and adoption. The updated strategy will aim to strengthen the existing arrangements by introducing the capture and assessment of risk at director level; this will ensure that there are clear linkages between all tiers of the organisation.

The full review of Business Continuity was completed in November 2019. The outputs of this work included an updated Business Continuity Strategy, a Business Continuity Incident Plan, an updated Business Impact Analysis, an Alternative Premises Plan, and the completion of 19 Action Cards, which provide step-by-step procedures to be followed to address service specific disruption for the Council's most critical activities.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

the report be noted and that Risk Management arrangements will be reviewed and updated in the coming months to ensure that the strategy and associated guidance is sufficient to match the needs of the Council.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: The continuous development of Risk Management and Business Continuity is essential to ensure effective management and planning within the Council.

| |
|---|
| The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above. |
|---|

Risk Management and Business Continuity Annual Report

Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Julie Fisher, Chief Executive
Email: julie.fisher@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3333

Contact Person: Pino Mastromarco, Senior Policy Officer
Email: pino.mastromarco@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3464

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ayesha Azad
Email: cllrayesha.azad@woking.gov.uk

Shadow Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ann-Marie Barker
Email: cllrann-marie.barker@woking.gov.uk

Date Published: 7 July 2021

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on Risk and Business Continuity Management arrangements that are in place within the Council. The status of both of these functions is reported on an annual basis. Risk Management and Business Continuity provides the framework through which the Council identifies, manages and mitigates its business and operational risks.
- 1.2 Risk Management is the process whereby the organisation methodically identifies and manages the threats and opportunities that might exist within a Council activity. Business Continuity sets out to enhance the strategic and tactical capability of the organisation to plan for incidents and business disruptions, in order to continue business operations at an acceptable pre-defined level.
- 1.3 Risk Management and Business Continuity Planning are not one off activities. They are part of a continuous process that runs throughout the Council's activities, taking into account all aspects such as projects as well as day-to-day work that is undertaken. It must be integrated into the culture of the Council with an effective strategy and led from the top.
- 1.4 The continuous improvement of risk and business continuity arrangements will also feed into the ongoing work of aligning strategic planning and performance management functions across the Council. All of these functions working together will provide an integrated and cohesive framework for prioritising the delivery of effective services.
- 1.5 The functional responsibility for corporate Risk Management and Business Continuity rests with the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT). The Business Improvement Team is accountable for overall delivery and review. All senior managers are responsible, with guidance and support from Business Improvement, for ensuring appropriate risk and business continuity arrangements are deployed in their functions, services and areas of responsibility.

2.0 Risk Management

- 2.1 Risk can be defined as the combination of the probability of an event and its consequences. In any organisation there is the potential for events and consequences that can result in opportunities for benefits or threats to success. Corporate Strategic Risks have been reviewed and updated by CLT since the last annual report, and the risks that have been identified have been logged and owners allocated. Due to the challenges posed by Covid, Service Plan risks were not updated in 2020, however, the Service Planning process will recommence in September this year, during which all risks at this level will be reviewed and updated.
- 2.2 The current Risk Management Strategy covers the period from 2015 to 2020, which means that it is now due a formal review and update to reflect current best practice. Work to update the Risk Management Strategy is underway, and will be submitted to the Executive in September for review and adoption. The updated strategy will aim to strengthen the existing arrangements by introducing the capture and assessment of risk at director level; this will ensure that there are clear linkages between all tiers of the organisation. All suggested changes to the Strategy will be submitted to CLT for discussion and sign-off.

3.0 Business Continuity

- 3.1 Business Continuity arrangements were last reviewed and updated in November 2019. Various documents and procedures make up the Council's Business Continuity Plans. These are listed here:

Business Continuity Strategy: This document details the purpose of Business Continuity Management, the Council's overall approach to Business Continuity (including documentation, organisational structure, testing and training), and the relationship between Business Continuity, Emergency Planning and Disaster Recovery.

Business Continuity Incident Plan: The Business Continuity Incident Plan details the steps that should be taken when faced with a Business Continuity disruption. This plan lists the process that will be taken to ensure that critical functions remain up and running, or are brought up and running, in the event of a threat to normal service.

Business Impact Analysis (BIA): To determine the Council's critical functions that need to continue to run in the event of a Business Continuity disruption, a BIA has been completed for every Council function. This is reviewed annually. The BIA assesses what the impact would be (Minimal, Noticeable, Major, Disaster) if a function was not available in a particular time period (1 hour, 1 day, 3 days, 1 week, 2 weeks) and in a particular circumstance (Emergency, Human Welfare/Environment, Breaches of Statutory Duty, Damage to Reputation, Financial Implications).

Action Cards: An Action Card is completed for any Council function that is assessed as having a 'disaster' level of impact if it was unavailable. This document details the things that would stop the service running (e.g. lack of staff, loss of the Civic Offices), any mitigation action that has been taken to reduce the impact of the issue, and actions that would be taken to restore the service to an acceptable minimum standard. The Action Card also lists the people that would be responsible, the equipment and information they would require, and the overall actions that they would take to respond to a Business Continuity disruption.

Alternative Premises Plan: The Alternative Premises Plan details the process for setting up the Upper Gallery at the Leisure Centre as the Council's main base of operations in the event that the Civic Offices was unavailable.

- 3.2 The Business Continuity suite of documents, particularly the BIA and Action Cards, has assisted the Council in forming its approach in responding to the many challenges that Covid-19 has presented. Business Continuity documentation will also help the Council to move towards 'business as usual' operations once we are in a position to progress to that phase. Lessons learned from the Council's response to Covid-19 will be fed into the annual review of Business Continuity to ensure that the arrangements benefit from continuous improvement.

4.0 Conclusions

- 4.1 The application of Risk Management and Business Continuity Management remains very important for the Council. Good progress has been made in updating Business Continuity arrangements, and a similar review is currently underway for Risk Management. Work is also ongoing to provide the opportunity to further align risk and business continuity principles with emergency planning and disaster recovery, to ensure that the Council can achieve a robust and joined-up approach in all of these areas for the future.

5.0 Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 Risk management and business continuity are themes that need to be considered across all Council services. These disciplines underpin the effective delivery of the functions that the Council provides, which in turn supports the objectives listed in the Corporate Strategy.

6.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 6.1 No additional implications arise specifically from the report but any proposals to further improve or enhance resilience may have cost implications and these would be identified in any such proposal.
- 6.2 There are no risk implications, other than those outlined in this report.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 6.3 None arising from this report.

Legal

- 6.4 None arising from this report.

7.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 7.1 None arising from this report.

REPORT ENDS

EXECUTIVE – 15 JULY 2021

MONITORING REPORTS - PROJECTS

Executive Summary

The Executive receives regular reports on the progress of projects in the interests of financial prudence and to ensure open and transparent corporate governance.

This reports provides an update of progress on developments to the Council's project management methodology, assurance, processes and reporting.

A report detailing the status of projects as at the end of June 2021, incorporating capital and revenue projects will be presented to the meeting of the Executive on 9 September 2021. The report will incorporate developments highlighted in this progress report.

There are no specific areas for concern or action by the Executive.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

the report be received.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To monitor progress on development to the Council's project management approach.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Julie Fisher, Chief Executive
Email: julie.fisher@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3333

Contact Person: Pino Mastromarco, Senior Policy Officer
Email: pino.mastromarco@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3464
Dawn George, Business Improvement Officer
Email: dawn.george@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3407

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ayesha Azad
Email: Cllrayesha.azad@woking.gov.uk

Shadow Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ann-Marie Barker
Email: cllrann-marie.barker@woking.gov.uk

Date Published: 7 July 2021

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The undertaking of projects is an integral part of Woking Borough Council (WBC) business delivery, and a significant amount of Council resources are allocated to their successful completion. Project management processes have therefore been developed and maintained to bring consistency to how projects are managed, and to aid the project manager in delivering projects on time, to budget and to the desired standard.
- 1.2 The process has been structured to be flexible and user friendly so it can meet the specific needs of the Council. It has been designed to add value to officers who are leading on projects and support the development of a common standard and capability; its primary objective is to complement the WBC can do culture, not compromise it.
- 1.3 Every WBC project, regardless of size or type, is required to follow the WBC project management method which is based on the principles of PRINCE2 project management methodology, which is regarded as the best practice approach when implementing projects.
- 1.4 In response to the Corporate Plan priority Effective Use of Resources, the developing Medium Term Financial Strategy and in response to peer reports and learning from best practice, we are developing our project management practices so that we continually improve, use resources wisely and drive out benefits from our investment into project activity.

2.0 Progress Update

- 2.1 The key activity since the last report to the Executive on monitoring projects has been:
 - Project Support Office undertaking assurance reviews of all projects. An initial first pass review has taken place and a more detailed follow up is planned through July and August in order to provide an assurance review for the report to the Executive of 9 September 2021.
 - Consolidation of all projects onto the Council's project management method managed through the SharePoint platform.
 - Administered the closure of in excess of 24 projects.
 - Reviewed the project management process to:
 - Capture the alignment of projects to Corporate Plan priorities;
 - Capture any third party engagement;
 - Capture any confidentiality and disclosure requirements;
 - Capture any officer interests.
 - Overview training has been delivered to the Corporate Leadership Team and Senior Managers.
 - Developed scope for bespoke project management training – commissioning of training is subject to review of costs and budget provision.
 - Established an initial portfolio report for the Corporate Leadership Team.
 - Established an officer Corporate Programme Board and Board reporting.

- Proof of concept to move process from on-premise to cloud hosted as part of the Microsoft Office 365 project.

3.0 Corporate Plan

- 3.1 The review of project management is in support of the corporate plan priority of Effective Use of Resources.

4.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 4.1 There are no engagement and consultation implications arising from this review as it relates to internal management processes.

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 A report detailing the status of projects as at the end of June 2021, incorporating capital and revenue projects will be presented to the meeting of the Executive on 9 September 2021. The report will incorporate developments highlighted in this progress report.

6.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 6.2 No specific Human Resource or Training and Development implications arising from this report. Additional project management training is being scoped and assessed and will be considered subject to costs and budget provision.
- 6.3 There are no equalities implications.

Legal

- 6.4 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

REPORT ENDS