



COUNCIL

8 February 2024

To: The Mayor and Members of
WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL

SUMMONS TO A MEETING

You are hereby summoned to attend an ORDINARY MEETING of the COUNCIL to be held in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Gloucester Square, Woking on THURSDAY, THE EIGHTH DAY OF FEBRUARY 2024 at 7.00 pm to transact the business specified in the agenda overleaf.

JULIE FISHER
Chief Executive

Civic Offices,
Woking

NOTE: Filming Council Meetings

Please note the meeting will be filmed and broadcast live and subsequently as an archive on the Council's website (www.woking.gov.uk). The images and sound recording may 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.



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AGENDA

Prior to the commencement of business, Reverend Gillaine Holland, Vicar from St Michaels Church, Sheerwater, Woking will say prayers.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST. (Pages 5 - 6)

- (i) To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary and other interests from Members in respect of any item to be considered at the meeting.
- (ii) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Strategic Director - Corporate Resources, Kevin Foster 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 Foster may advise on those items.
- (iii) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Strategic Director - Communities, 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 on those items.
- (iv) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Head of Transformation, Digital and Customer, Adam Walther, 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 Walther may advise on those items.

3. MINUTES. (Pages 7 - 20)

To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 30 November 2023, as published.

4. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS.

5. URGENT BUSINESS.

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

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF PUBLIC WBC24-007. (Pages 21 - 24)

To receive questions from Members of the Public of which due notice has been given.

7. PETITION - ST MARY'S COMMUNITY CENTRE, BYFLEET WBC24-010. (Pages 25 - 28)

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN AND THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE.

In accordance with Standing Orders, the Council to receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council (or their nominated spokesperson), Committee Chairmen and/or the Chief Executive.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE WBC24-005. (Pages 29 - 32)

To receive and consider recommendations from the Executive.

9a. Community Asset Transfer Policy EXE24-012. (Pages 33 - 70)

9b. General Fund Budget 2024-25 and Proposed Savings EXE24-001. (Pages 71 - 106)

9c. Housing Revenue Account Budgets 2024-25 EXE24-002. (Pages 107 - 116)

9d. Capital Programme 2023-24 to 2027-28 EXE24-003. (Pages 117 - 140)

9e. Future of Brockhill EXE24-017. (Pages 141 - 148)

10. DESIGNATION OF POLLING PLACE - WARD OF HEATHLANDS WBC24-009. Report To Follow.

11. APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND SECTION 151 OFFICER WBC24-004. (Pages 149 - 170)

12. APPOINTMENT OF RETURNING OFFICER WBC24-008. (Pages 171 - 172)

13. AMENDMENT TO CALENDAR OF MEETINGS WBC24-006. (Pages 173 - 174)

AGENDA ENDS

Date Published - 31 January 2024

Note: At the close of the meeting the Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor Raja, would like to invite the following to join him in the parlour:-

Councillors Aziz, Barker, Boote, Brown, Cosnahan, Davis, Greentree, Hussain, Javaid, Johnson, Kirby, Morales, Mukherjee, Nicholson, Oades, Roberts, and Sullivan, Independent Co-Opted Person Claire Storey and Independent Person Tim Stokes together with Officers attending the meeting.

Schedule Referred to in Declaration of Interests

Council-appointed directorships

Kevin Foster, Strategic Director – Corporate Resources	
Brookwood Cemetery Limited	Kingfield Community Sports Centre Limited
Brookwood Park Limited	LAC 2021 Limited (Dormant)
Export House Limited	Woking Necropolis and Mausoleum Limited
Woking Shopping Limited	

Louise Strongitharm, Strategic Director – Communities	
Rutland Woking (Carhouse Lane) Limited	Rutland Woking (Residential) Limited
Rutland (Woking) Limited	

Adam Walther, Head of Transformation, Digital and Customer	
Brookwood Cemetery Limited	Thameswey Developments Limited
Brookwood Park Limited	Thameswey Energy Limited
Thameswey Central Milton Keynes Limited	Thameswey Limited
Thameswey Sustainable Communities Limited	Thameswey Solar Limited
Woking Necropolis and Mausoleum Limited	

Council 30 November 2023

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WOKING

held on 30 November 2023

Present:

Cllr M I Raja (Mayor)
Cllr L Morales (Deputy Mayor)

Cllr A-M Barker	Cllr D Jordan
Cllr A Boote	Cllr A Kirby
Cllr J Brown	Cllr R Leach
Cllr G Cosnahan	Cllr L Lyons
Cllr K Davis	Cllr C Martin
Cllr S Dorsett	Cllr J Morley
Cllr W Forster	Cllr E Nicholson
Cllr P Graves	Cllr S Oades
Cllr S Greentree	Cllr L Rice
Cllr S Hussain	Cllr D Roberts
Cllr I Johnson	

Absent: Councillors H Akberali, T Aziz, A Caulfield, A Javaid, S Mukherjee, T Spenser and M Sullivan.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Akberali, Councillor Caulfield, Councillor Javaid, Councillor Mukherjee, Councillor Spencer and Councillor Sullivan, and Claire Storey, Independent Co-Opted Member.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Strategic Director - Corporate Resources, Kevin Foster declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which he was a Council-appointed director. The companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that Mr Foster could advise on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Strategic Director - Communities, Louise Strongitharm, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which she was a Council-appointed director. The companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that Mrs Strongitharm could advise on those items.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Head of Transformation, Digital and Customer, Adam Walther, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which he was a Council-appointed

director. The companies were listed in an attached schedule. The interests were such that Mr Walther could advise on those items.

3. MINUTES.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Ordinary Meetings of the Council held on 28 September 2023 and 12 October 2023 be approved and signed as true and correct records.

4. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS.

The Mayor advised the Council of the recent events and engagements he had attended, including the opening of the refurbished Old Woking Community Centre and the Voluntary Sector Fair held at Woking Leisure Centre. The Remembrance Day Service had been very well attended and more recently the Mayor had attended the switching on of the Christmas Lights in Jubilee Square.

The Mayor took the opportunity to wish everyone a very happy Christmas and New Year.

5. URGENT BUSINESS.

No items of Urgent Business were considered.

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF PUBLIC WBC23-046.

A question had been received from a member of public. The question, together with the reply from the Portfolio Holder, was presented as follows.

Question 1 – Wade Pollard

“At the meeting of the Woking Borough Council Executive on 24th March 2022 it was resolved the Old Woking Community Centre project be included in the Investment Programme of which £1.4m to be funded by the Council through S106 developer contributions.

The project has now been completed. I know this because the Council recently put out a statement on social media to announce it. The statement also included the comment that the project had received £1.4m funding from Woking Borough Council (Community Infrastructure Levy grant).

The latest Community Infrastructure (CIL) Funding by available area statement I have seen is dated October 2023. It showed funding available of £163,283.53 for Mount Hermon Ward. I believe Old Woking to be in this Ward. This sum is after deducting only £13,100 for spending and commitments.

The table is for amounts that can be authorised by Ward Councillors, i.e. 15% of the total CIL. Grossing it up to its total of £1.1m is still short of the amount spent. It is not strictly necessary to do that as the 85% does not have come from CIL within the Ward. However

other Ward Councillors would not be happy to have the impact of developments without the corollary CIL spending within their Ward and to have it spent in other Wards.

This means that if the funding provided by the Council came from CIL, none was deducted from that accruing directly to Mount Hermon Ward.

My question;-

Was the Old Woking Community Centre project funded by S106 developer contributions or from a Community Infrastructure Levy grant?"

Reply from Councillor Ann-Marie Barker

"In March 2021 the Executive approved a proposal to develop the Old Woking Community Centre for use by Woking College. The extension of the College was considered a key benefit for the community. The works were to be funded partly by the College and were subject to developers contributions being identified as available to apply to this project.

The scheme was worked up in detail with Woking College and the College identified some additional funds which were allocated to the scheme. Whilst s106 developers contributions specifically to support education provision had been identified, it was not possible to allocate Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds to this scheme due to the competing pressures on these funds which support all infrastructure in the Borough. The project budget was therefore amended to a total of £2m (£2.9m previously) funded £600k (£400k previously) by the College and £1.4m by the Council through s106 developers contributions for education. No CIL monies were allocated to the project. The project included in the Council's Investment Programme reflected this amended funding. The project subsequently received additional external funding from the Old Woking Community Association and Surrey County Council's Your Fund Surrey (YFS) which increased the scope of works.

For clarification, the Old Woking Community Centre is in the Hoe Valley Ward."

The Mayor thanked Mr Wade for submitting the question.

[Post Meeting Note: It was clarified following the meeting that the Old Woking Community Association had not provided any funding for the project.]

7. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL WBC23-044.

Copies of the question submitted under Standing Order 8.1 together with the draft reply had been published in advance of the meeting. The reply was confirmed by the Portfolio Holder and a supplementary question was asked and reply given as set out below:

Question from Councillor Josh Brown

"Can the Portfolio Holder confirm whether the Council applied to the Phase II of the Swimming Pool Support Fund, and if not, why not?"

Reply from Councillor Ellen Nicholson

“Regrettably, an application could not be made within the time allowed due to a late change to the eligibility criteria. The Council was initially informed that we were not eligible to apply for either Phase 1 (revenue) or Phase 2 (capital) of the Swimming Pool Support Fund due to the Section 114 notice having been laid. I felt that this was unfair and challenged this through the Local Government Association. There was a delay in receiving a response, which eventually confirmed that we would be permitted to submit an application for Phase 2. Unfortunately, this confirmation was only received 2 days before the deadline for Phase 2. This did not allow sufficient time to prepare a detailed application for capital funds that would have needed quotes for works from contractors. However, the Council is now in a better position to apply for future funding through Sport England or similar.”

Supplementary Question

“Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor. Why is it that members of the Executive suggested on social media after you were made aware of the, the, the second phase that the Council could have applied for the second phase of the swimming, swimming pool support fund? Why, why is it after the 15th of October, members of the Executive were seen on social media still suggesting that the Council couldn't apply for the swimming pool support fund because of our Section 114 notice.”

Reply from Councillor Ellen Nicholson

“Thank you for your comment there, Councillor Brown. I don't have social media in front of me with the actual timelines. I think it has been incredibly difficult to actually work out what is possible and what's not possible with a Section 114, whether we were able to apply for funding, whether we weren't able to apply for funding, whether we were having help from the Local Government Association and our Commissioners as well. So I think it has been an incredibly muddy process, so whether the timelines on social media and whether the timelines within the answer to the question are accurate, I can't say at this moment in time, but the implication was that we were not able to apply for the funding due to the Section 114 due to the inherited financial situation, and it all comes back to that. Thank you.”

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN AND THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE.

The Leader of the Council advised that it continued to be a challenging year, with more challenging times ahead. Since the last meeting of Council, the Chief Executive had announced that she would be leaving Woking Borough Council. It was not felt that the time was right to recruit a new permanent Chief Executive. An interim solution was needed and, in view of the Government intervention, an interim Managing Director from the Government pool of experienced Commissioners would be appointed. In the meantime the Council continued to implement the Improvement and Recovery Plan.

In regard to the need to appoint a permanent Director of Finance, the Leader of the Council advised that it was intended to confirm an appointment at Council on 8 February 2024. Eugene Walker, the existing Interim Director of Finance, had offered to support the new appointment through to the summer of 2024.

Reference was made to the recent debate and press coverage of electric vehicle (EV) charging in the Red Car Park. The Leader clarified that the figure discussed, of £148,000,

related to the total spend on electricity for the car park over 18 months; the actual cost of the EV charging was approximately £1,500 each month, in-line with a previous policy of the Council to provide free EV charging. The Council was now in the final stages of commissioning new software which would allow a tariff to be applied to EV charging, and a supplementary report would be considered later in the meeting proposing the introduction of charges.

No announcements were made by the Committee Chairs or the Chief Executive.

9. ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS, DOMESTIC ABUSE AND WHITE RIBBON WBC23-042.

Councillor Nicholson, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, introduced an item highlighting the work of the charity White Ribbon, which sought to prevent violence against women and girls by addressing its root causes and changing long-established and harmful attitudes, systems and behaviours around masculinity that perpetuated inequality and violence.

The Council welcomed the report and reiterated its support for the work of White Ribbon.

RESOLVED

- That (i) Woking Borough Council continues to resolve to raise awareness and understanding of risk posed by Violence Against Women and Girls across the Borough through its internal processes and external communications;
- (ii) Woking Borough Council works with partners and stakeholders in collaboration in achieving the greater awareness of Violence Against Women and Girls; and
- (iii) Woking Borough Council revisits its aim to be White Ribbon accredited annually, and undertakes to initiate this when the financial situation stabilises.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES WBC23-041.

The Council had before it a report on the recommendations from the Executive and the Standards and Audit Committee, setting out the extracts from the minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 16 November 2023 and the Standards and Audit Committee held on 23 November 2023. In accordance with the Constitution, the recommendations were deemed to have been moved and seconded.

10A. REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2024-25 EXE23-057

Councillor Roberts, Portfolio Holder for Finance, introduced the report on the annual review of Fees and Charges, setting out the context in which the proposals had been drawn up. As a result of over reliance on income from commercial investments, the Council faced a budget shortfall in the region of £12m. Whilst the Council had identified significant savings, it was clear that it was no longer in a position to fund its discretionary services and faced three options; such services could be placed with an organisation better placed to meet community needs; or, if a priority, the services would have to become self-funding; or the

Council had to withdraw from the service. In future years, the fees and charges would be reviewed in line with a commercial strategy of the Council, work on which had already started.

Councillor Roberts highlighted two points: in respect of the car park charges, a Parking Study was currently taking place and proposals would be put forward for Member consideration in February 2024. Secondly, a supplementary paper had been published earlier in the day, setting out an additional recommendation (v) for the Council to consider in respect of introducing fees for the electric vehicle charging points in Council owned car parks. As an officer report and proposal, it was not necessary for the recommendation to be formally moved and seconded.

The proposals were debated at length by the Council, with concerns raised over the level of increases in the Council's fees and charges. It was argued that not all the proposals were supported by detailed cost breakdowns in each service. Reference was made to the level of inflation and the Council was advised that the charges had to be based on anticipated future rates of inflation, noting that the rate in recent years had been significantly higher than predicted. It was added that, in view of the financial position of the Council, it was essential that the Authority maximised its receipts.

The increases in the charges for the Rhoda McGaw Theatre were highlighted, with concern expressed that local drama groups would no longer be able to afford to use the Theatre. The increase in the charge for green waste collection was also referred to, though it was advised that the new charge would bring the Council in line with that of other Surrey Authorities. Some Members also felt that it had not been possible to fully scrutinise the proposals, with additional details only received earlier in the day.

Councillor Roberts responded to the points raised during the debate, emphasising that it would take time for the Council to achieve its ambitions around the annual review of fees and charges. The concerns and frustrations of Members over the position the Council found itself in were acknowledged.

The Mayor referred Members to the recommendations set out in the supplementary report, together with the additional recommendation (v). In accordance with Standing Order 10.8, recommendations (i) to (v) were put to a vote and the names of Members voting for and against were recorded as follows:

In favour:	Councillors A-M Barker, A Boote, G Cosnahan, W Forster, P Graves, S Greentree, S Hussain, I Johnson, D Jordan, A Kirby, R Leach, L Lyons, C Martin, L Morales, J Morley, E Nicholson, L Rice and D Roberts.
Total in favour:	18
Against:	Councillors J Brown, K Davis and S Dorsett.
Total against:	3
Present not voting:	The Mayor and Councillor S Oades.
Total present not voting:	2

The recommendations were therefore carried by 18 votes in favour and 3 votes against.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the discretionary fees and charges for 2024/25, as set out in Appendices 1 – 4 of the report, be approved;
- (ii) the proposed increases in discretionary fees and charges from 1st January 2024, as set out in Appendices 5 – 7 of the report, be approved;
- (iii) to move the waste service to a cost neutral position as soon as possible, any of the proposed 2024/25 increases for Bulky Waste and Waste Receptacles set out in Appendix 2 to the report that can be implemented quickly should be introduced at the earliest practical date following approval by Council;
- (iv) next year's process will use the Commercial Strategy and Protocol being developed as part of the Improvement and Recovery as the framework for setting fees and charges, to ensure that fairness, equity and social impacts are balanced with a sound commercial approach; and
- (v) delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director – Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Finance, to agree charging fees in respect of electric vehicle chargers in Council owned car parks.

10B. CLIMATE CHANGE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD) EXE23-067

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulation introduced a report which proposed the adoption of a revised Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The SPD, which had been reviewed through the Greener Woking Working Group, would provide updated guidance on the application of policies within the Core Strategy relating to climate change.

A public consultation on the Climate Change SPD had been completed and the Council had received 17 responses, including from Thames Water, Natural England, WeACT and local Neighbourhood Forums.

The proposals within the SPD were welcomed by the Council, noting that they addressed many of the issues that Climate Change would bring and would include all of the villages in the Borough.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the various representations to the Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) consultation together with Officer's responses and recommendations as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be noted;
- (ii) the revised Climate Change SPD included in Appendix 2 to the report be adopted as Supplementary Planning Document for the purposes of managing development across the Borough and other planning decisions; and

- (iii) the requirements of the SPD should apply from the date of adoption, in this case 30th November 2023.

10C. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2024-25 EXE23-058

The Council was invited to agree the calendar of meetings for the 2024/25 Municipal Year. The Leader of the Council noted that the importance of scrutiny was recognised and that the dates of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been chosen to take place shortly before the meetings of the Executive.

RESOLVED

That the Calendar of Meetings 2024/25 be approved as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

10D. AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT PLANNING COMMITTEE STA23-024

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ann-Marie Barker, introduced the recommendations of the Standards and Audit Committee which proposed amendments to the Constitution relating to Public Speaking at Planning Committee. The main changes proposed included the reduction of the threshold for public speaking from ten to five objections and the inclusion of supporters of applications in meeting the threshold. It was noted that the proposals had been considered by the Corporate Governance Working Group, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Planning Committee before being discussed by the Standards and Audit Committee.

The Councillors welcomed the changes to the public speaking process and supported the recommendations.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the amended Public Speaking at Planning Committee section of the Constitution (Appendix 2 to the report) be adopted, as amended by the Standards and Audit Committee in relation to paragraph 4.10;
- (ii) the authority delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make minor amendments to the Constitution be noted, including amendments to references within the document and section numbering; and
- (iii) the Monitoring Officer be instructed to make the agreed changes to the Constitution.

10E. AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION - MEDIA PROTOCOL STA23-025

The Standards and Audit Committee had considered proposals for the adoption, and inclusion in the Constitution, of a Corporate Press and Media Protocol which set out the roles and responsibilities for managing media relations and the reputation of the Council. The Protocol would apply to members of the Executive and Council Officers who may be contacted by representatives of the media.

Councillor Kirby welcomed the Protocol but spoke against Section 8 of the paper which stated that the Government appointed Commissioners would have the opportunity to

review and comment on any press releases and public statements. Councillor Kirby argued that the proposal could in essence gag the Council and advised that he would not support the proposal. The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Morales, shared concerns over the reference to the Commissioners and formally moved that Section 8 of the report (Commissioner Team Approvals Process) should be removed from the Protocol. The motion was seconded by Councillor Hussain.

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services advised the Council that the Commissioners had the authority to overrule decisions of the Council and had the right to approve press releases and statements issued by the Council. Removing reference to the Commissioners from within the Protocol would not change this right. It was noted that to-date there had been no disagreements between Members, Officers and Commissioners with respect to press releases or statements issued by the Council. In view of the advice, several Councillors indicated that they would support the adoption of the Protocol as drafted and Councillor Morales withdrew her motion.

In accordance with Standing Order 10.8, the recommendations set out in the report before Council were put to a vote and the names of Members voting for and against were recorded as follows:

In favour: Councillors A-M Barker, A Boote, J Brown, G Cosnahan, K Davis, S Dorsett, W Forster, P Graves, S Greentree, S Hussain, I Johnson, D Jordan, R Leach, L Lyons, C Martin, J Morley, E Nicholson, S Oades, L Rice and D Roberts.

Total in favour: 20

Against: Councillor A Kirby.

Total against: 1

Present not voting: The Mayor and Councillor L Morales.

Total present not voting: 2

The recommendations were therefore carried by 20 votes in favour and 1 vote against.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the Corporate Press and Media Protocol (Appendix 1 to the report) be adopted;
- (ii) the authority delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make minor amendments to the Constitution be noted, including amendments to references within the document and section numbering; and
- (iii) the Monitoring Officer be instructed to make the agreed changes to the Constitution.

10F. AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION - PROVISIONS FOR URGENT BUSINESS STA23-026.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ann-Marie Barker, outlined the proposals to adopt a formal procedure to deal with matters of Urgent Business, and the recommendations of the

Standards and Audit Committee. If agreed by the Council, the procedure would be added to the Council's Constitution.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the section on Urgent Business (Appendix 1 to the report) be added to the Council's Constitution under Section 1 of Part 4;
- (ii) the authority delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make minor amendments to the Constitution be noted, including amendments to references within the document and section numbering; and
- (iii) the Monitoring Officer be instructed to make the agreed changes to the Constitution.

10F. AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION - QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF PUBLIC STA23-027.

The Council considered the recommendations of the Standards and Audit Committee which proposed amendments to the existing arrangements for receiving questions from members of the public at Council meetings, which had been introduced earlier in the year. The recommendations included the suggestion that each questioner would be offered the opportunity to ask one supplementary question at the meeting.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the existing section on Questions from Members of the Public (Appendix 1 to the report) in the Council's Constitution be updated under Section 1 of Part 4;
- (ii) the addition of any references within the new section to other sections within the Constitution be delegated to the Monitoring Officer as minor amendments; and
- (iii) the Monitoring Officer be instructed to make the agreed changes to the Constitution.

11. IMPROVEMENT AND RECOVERY PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE WBC23-043.

The Council had before it an update report on the Improvement and Recovery Plan, adopted following the statutory government intervention and the issuing of a Section 114 Notice. The Plan would ensure that the expectations detailed in the Secretary of State's Directions published on 25 May 2023 would be delivered and would help the Council return to meeting its best value duty. The Plan would also draw upon the recommendations of the non-statutory external assurance review into the Council's finances, investments and related governance.

The Leader of the Council explained that the three-to-five-year plan, adopted in August 2023, detailed the actions that the Council would undertake to deliver against the Government directions, together with milestones and delivery targets to measure progress. The Council was required to report to the Commissioners on the delivery of the Improvement and Recovery Plan after three months, six months and thereafter at six-monthly intervals, or at such intervals as the Commissioners directed. The first three-

month progress report had been submitted to Commissioners in August; the report now before the Council outlined the progress after six months. The report also included the Chief Executive’s position statement in relation to the Plan.

The Leader of the Council responded to points raised during the discussion before the Mayor referred the Councillors to the recommendation set out in the report.

RESOLVED

That the six months’ progress since the beginning of the Government intervention on 25 May 2023 be approved.

12. POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES REVIEW WBC23-045.

The report before the Council outlined the outcomes of a review of the existing arrangements for the Borough’s polling districts and polling places. The review was a requirement placed on all local Authorities responsible for elections and had to be completed by no later than 31 January 2025.

A consultation exercise had been undertaken on the Council’s proposals. The Leader of the Council explained that no changes had been proposed for the majority of the existing arrangements. The review had therefore focussed on those polling districts where changes were proposed, namely in the St John’s West polling district and the Barnsbury Polling District.

In respect of the Barnsbury Polling District, the Leader advised that Members were keen to retain the use of The Lighthouse as a polling station which, due to the lack of a suitably accessible entrance, could not currently be considered as a suitable venue. Members were therefore keen to ensure that further investigations were undertaken to explore options to address the accessibility issues of The Lighthouse. In view of this, the Leader moved and Councillor Forster seconded an amended recommendation, changing recommendation (ii) from “the Woking Sportsbox be designated as the polling place for the Barnsbury polling district (D5) in the Heathlands Ward;” to “the polling place for the Barnsbury polling district (D5) in the Heathlands Ward not be determined until further investigation is undertaken with respect to necessary accessibility requirements;”.

RESOLVED

That (i) the existing arrangements for the following polling districts and their designated polling places be continued:

A1 - West Byfleet	E3 - Shackleford Road
A2 - Byfleet	E4 - Old Woking
B1 - Town Centre	E5 - Gresham Park
B2 - Town Centre North	F1 - Horsell West
B3 - Walton Road	F2 - Horsell South
B4 - Sheerwater	F3 - Horsell East
B5 - Board School Road	G1 - Knaphill West
B6 - Woodham	G2 - Knaphill South
C1 - Goldsworth West	G3 - Knaphill East
C2 - Goldsworth Central	G4 - Knaphill North
C3 - Goldsworth East	H1 - Mount Hermon West
C4 - Goldsworth South	H2 - Mount Hermon West

D1 - Brookwood	H3 - Mount Hermon Central A
D2 - Brookwood South	H4 - Mount Hermon Central B
D3 - Mayford	J1 - Maybury
D4 - Hook Heath	J2 - Maybury South
D6 - Sutton Green	J3 - Pyrford
E1 - Westfield	J4 - Pyrford North
E2 - Kingfield	K3 - St John's East

- (ii) the polling place for the Barnsbury polling district (D5) in the Heathlands Ward not be determined until further investigation is undertaken with respect to necessary accessibility requirements;
- (iii) changes to the St John's West polling district (K1) boundary to include all properties within St John's Lye (Festival Path) and Carolyn Close from the St John's Central polling district (K2);
- (iv) the St John's Memorial Hall be designated as the polling place for the St John's West polling district (K1) in the St John's Ward;
- (v) changes to the St John's Central polling district (K2) boundary to remove all properties within St John's Lye (Festival Path) and Carolyn Close to the St John's West polling district (K1);
- (vi) the St John's Church be designated as the polling place for the St John's Central polling district (K2) in the St John's Ward: and
- (vii) the Council's appreciation be expressed to the residents of Sutton Avenue for their support and assistance in the use of the Common Room for the May 2023 Poll.

13. NOTICES OF MOTION.

Councillor Hassan Akberali

The following motion was moved by Councillor Graves and seconded by Councillor Boote.

13A. NOTICE OF MOTION - COUNCILLOR HASSAN AKBERALI - SINGLE USE VAPES.

"This motion proposes that Woking Borough Council resolves that the Leader of the Council writes to:-

1. Jonathan Lord MP, requesting him:
 - a. To make urgent representations asking for banning single-use vapes on behalf of Woking schools, parents, and residents.
 - b. To expedite the conclusion and actions of the public consultation, bearing in mind the consequences of the EU proposing a ban in 2026 and France rolling out a ban in December 2023 and the risk as those markets close, disposable vapes will flood into the UK.

- c. Provide schools funding to install detection devices to improve the discovery of illegal substances instead of schools having to fund out of their hard-pressed budgets.
 - d. Prohibit possession of vapes on school premises with appropriate violation measures.
2. Surrey Trading Standards to request they:
- a. Carry out regular test purchases, seize products, and issue fixed penalty notices when a business breaches the law.
 - b. Address the shortage of qualified trading standard officers required to prosecute those retailers selling to underage customers.
 - c. Implement mandatory age-of-sale signage on vaping products.
 - d. Implement sanctions for breaching these rules, the same as penalties handed out under tobacco display regulations.
 - e. Publish how many test purchases have been conducted by trading standards followed by successful prosecutions.
 - f. The other area that needs tackling is internet sales of illegal vapes and those containing THC and Spice, which will need coordinated action between the police and trading standards.”

In the absence of Councillor Akberali, the Notice of Motion was introduced by Councillor Graves who advised the Council of the environmental impact of single-use vapes being discarded. The purpose of the Motion was two-fold; to encourage the Borough’s MP to make representations seeking an end to single-use vapes and to seek action by Trading Standards to enforce the laws around vaping. It was noted that a public consultation was currently being undertaken by the Government on creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping and Councillor Graves urged Councillors to complete the consultation before it ended on 6 December 2023.

Several Councillors expressed their support for the Motion, noting the impact of vaping on young people and schools and drawing attention to the efforts of manufacturers to target young people. Reference was also made to the damaging effect of the batteries in single-use vapes, which could lead to fires and contamination of the environment and were toxic if ingested. However, the point was made by Councillor Davis that, whilst he was sympathetic to the objectives, the Council should not spend time on Motions which had nothing to do with Woking. Concerns were also raised over the wording of the Motion and what the Council could achieve through the Motion.

Councillor Graves responded to the points raised during the debate, recognising the strong feelings the topic had evoked amongst Councillors. At the request of Councillor Davis, a named vote was held and, in accordance with Standing Order 10.8, the names of Members voting for and against the Motion were recorded as follows:

In favour: Councillors A-M Barker, A Boote, G Cosnahan, W Forster, P Graves, S Greentree, S Hussain, I Johnson, D Jordan, A Kirby, R Leach, L Lyons, C Martin, L Morales, J Morley, E Nicholson, S Oades, L Rice and D Roberts.

Total in favour: 19*

Against: Councillors K Davis and S Dorsett.

Total against: 2

Present not voting: The Mayor and Councillor J Brown.

Total present not voting: 2

The recommendations were therefore carried by 19 votes in favour and 2 votes against.

RESOLVED

That the Motion be supported.

*[*NOTE: Following the meeting, the number of those announced as having voted in favour of the Motion was reviewed and revised from 18 to 19.]*

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 10.19 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____

COUNCIL – 8 FEBRUARY 2024

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF PUBLIC

Executive Summary

The following questions have been received from Members of Public. The individuals who raised the questions have been invited to attend the meeting. The relevant Portfolio Holder will be asked to provide a formal response.

Question 1 – Nikki Roberts on behalf of Surrey Coalition of Disabled People

“Many of the proposed service cuts or reductions will have an impact on Disabled People. These proposals will disproportionately affect this population.

Please confirm if Woking Borough Council have asked central government to make up the financial shortfall that disabled people will face by the proposed Woking Borough Council service cuts?

If not, how can we be assured that Disabled People living in Woking won't have to pay the additional costs they potentially face? Surrey Coalition of Disabled People are happy to collaborate with Woking Borough Council to discuss solutions to ensure that Disabled People aren't disproportionately affected.”

Supporting Statement

“Disabled People in Woking will be disproportionately affected by the potential threat of closure or changes to the following services:

- community transport scheme
- community centres and pavilions
- swimming pool
- citizen's advice

Without the community transport scheme which offers a reduced rate of travel, the independence of Disabled People will be significantly reduced as the cost of taxis, in particular wheelchair accessible taxis, are unaffordable for some.

The community centres, pavilions and swimming pool are a lifeline to some, providing social contact and keeping people mobile.

Without citizen's advice, Disabled People will not be able to access support with completing forms such as PIP. Being unable to access benefits, will have a detrimental impact on finances and wellbeing.

It's well known that life costs more for disabled people. Disabled households with at least 1 disabled adult or child, face extra costs of £975 - £1122 a month on average. (Source Extra Costs | Disability charity Scope UK) The disability pay gap is 13.8% and has been fairly consistent for a long time Disability pay gaps in the UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) with only 7% of disabled workers earning over £30,000 in 2022 compared to 54% of non-disabled workers.

Our Cost-of-Living report published last year showed the disproportionate effect that it is having on Disabled People. 76% of Disabled People surveyed didn't turn on their heating last year as they couldn't afford to and 45% went without food. <https://surreycoalition.org.uk/cost-of-living-crisis/>"

Question 2 – Nikki Roberts on behalf of Surrey Coalition of Disabled People

"Following the publication of the Equality Impact Assessments (EIA), will Woking Borough Council be fulfilling its duty under the Care Act 2014 if the proposals are approved?"

The Care Act 2014 states people are entitled to:

1. receive services that prevent their care needs from becoming more serious, or delay the impact of their needs
2. can get the information and advice they need to make good decisions about care and support
3. have a range of provision of high quality, appropriate services to choose from."

Supporting Statement

"Community Transport

The mitigation in the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) only cites hospital visits and negates to include GP appointments, mental health support, or community/social activities.

The additional cost and difficulty in sourcing wheelchair accessible transport has not been considered. Of those (over 2,000) people who needed extra support to use the transport, there will not be a service to help them. Additionally, will the current community transport users meet the criteria for hospital transport?

Removing the transport (approx. £42 per person per year) will cost more in the longer term. For example, missed medical appointments, reduced footfall in the town centre.

By removing community transport with no direct replacement the council are in jeopardy of not fulfilling their duties under the Care Act 2014.

Citizen's Advice

The EIA states that 63% of Citizen Advice clients are disabled or have a long-term health condition. Disabled people can not access the information and advice they need to make good decisions about their care as outlined in the Care Act.

The mitigation covers a provision for debt advice but there are other reasons people contact Citizen Advice. For example, housing.

Pool in the Park

Pool in the Park is increasing costs as well as reducing the length of the Disabled Swimming Session will be reduced by 33%.

Many of the mitigations suggest the voluntary sector will provide additional support with less money. This will not be possible particularly as it's proposed the community grants programme is withdrawn in Woking."

Questions from Members of Public

Contact Person: Frank Jeffrey, Head of Democratic Services
Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3012

Date Published: 31 January 2024

COUCIL – 8 FEBRUARY 2024

PETITION – ST MARY'S COMMUNITY CENTRE, BYFLEET

Executive Summary

Woking Borough Council has received a petition which asks the Council to reject the proposed plan to relocate the Elderly Day Care Facilities and fully consult with local residents on any future proposals regarding St Mary's Community Centre.

In accordance with Woking Borough Council's arrangements for petitions, the matter has been referred for consideration by Council.

Recommendations

Council is requested to consider the petition and determine accordingly.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To agree a response to the petition

The Council has the authority to determine the recommendation set out above.

Background Papers: Paper petition.

Reporting Person: Frank Jeffrey, Head of Democratic Services
Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3012

Contact Person: Steve May, Head of Leisure and Communities
Email: steve.may@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3302

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ellen Nicholson
Email: CllrEllen.Nicholson@woking.gov.uk

Date Published: 31 January 2024

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 A petition has been received which asks the Council to reject the proposed plan to relocate the Elderly Day Care Facilities and fully consult with local residents on any future proposals regarding to St Mary's Community Centre, Byfleet. The petition has been received as a paper copy and received 425 signatures. The petition organisers also ran an electronic petition on change.org that gathered 2,756 signatures.
- 1.2 The number of signatures exceeds the threshold required for a petition to be referred to a meeting of Council and accordingly the Petitioner or their nominee has been invited to present the petition at the meeting of Council.
- 1.3 The petition has been submitted in the following terms:

“St Mary's Community Centre in Byfleet has been a haven for our elderly, frail, and vulnerable residents. The day care facilities include care and assistance from support staff, hot drinks and a hot midday meal, social and gentle exercise activities, and a return journey on the accessible Bustler bus.

The services are vital in ensuring their well-being and social integration in our multigenerational community space. In addition, the community centre is more than just a facility; it represents familiarity and comfort for its users who have built relationships with staff members and other users of the building including families and children over the years.

A sudden change in environment can be detrimental especially for those suffering from cognitive and physical impairments such as dementia and visual impairments. We, the undersigned, are opposed to the proposed relocation of the Elderly Day Centre Facilities away from St Mary's Community Centre, Byfleet. We call on Woking Borough Council to:

1. *Reject the proposed plan to relocate the Elderly Day Care Facilities; and*
2. *Fully consult with local residents on any future proposals regarding to St Mary's Community Centre, Byfleet”*

- 1.4 The paper petition was received on 18 December 2023.

2.0 Petition Scheme

- 2.1 As the number of signatories exceeds 300 the petition falls to be debated at the Council. In accordance with the Council's scheme for dealing with petitions, the petitioner has been invited to attend the meeting and present the petition. The presentation of a petition is limited to not more than three minutes, and should be confined to reading out, or summarising, the purpose of the petition, indicating the number and description of signatories, and making supporting remarks relevant to the petition.
- 2.2 Following the presentation, Members of Council will have the opportunity to ask questions of the petitioner. Thereafter, Council will discuss the petition and determine what action, if any, is to be taken. The Portfolio Holder has provided comments which are set out below.

3.0 Portfolio Holder Comments

- 3.1 I want to start by recognising the determination and compassion of the residents of Byfleet, evident not only in this petition to save St Mary's, but also through the work carried out by the community during the pandemic.
- 3.2 I think it is important to re-emphasise the Council's financial position. The Council faces a critical financial shortfall owing to its historic investment strategy. On Wednesday 7 June 2023,

Petition – St Mary's Community Centre, Byfleet

our Section 151 Officer issued Woking Borough Council (WBC) with a Section 114 Notice in response to the unprecedented financial challenges facing the authority. The 114 notice sets out how the Council faces a budget deficit of £1.2bn.

- 3.3 The Council must take action to set a sustainable medium term financial strategy and live within its means. It therefore has to stop funding non statutory services. This includes day care services.
- 3.4 I recognise the value that day care services at St Mary's brings to elderly and vulnerable residents. The Council has considered the equalities implications of this decision and is looking to mitigate the impact wherever possible, for example through signposting residents to alternative community provision.
- 3.5 We have also identified, through our public consultation process, a number of interested parties in West Byfleet who have indicated that they would be interested in taking over the running of St Mary's through a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) arrangement. This would enable to Council to make the required savings whilst retaining the asset for community value.
- 3.6 CAT is not an easy option. That is why the Council has moved quickly to produce a CAT policy which provides a clear framework and procedures for a CAT to follow. This policy has been co-produced with community representatives, including some of those interested in pursuing a CAT for St Mary's.
- 3.7 The Council also recognises that a CAT transfer will take time to complete. That is why we have committed £140,000 UK Shared Prosperity Funding to supporting the process and ensuring that facilities can stay open whilst a CAT transfer takes place.
- 3.8 I hope that the commitment of West Byfleet residents to keep St Mary's open, combined with the approval of the Council's CAT policy and the injection of significant UK SPF will enable this much-loved facility to continue to offer some, all or even more services in the future.
- 3.9 Therefore, given that discussions are ongoing with the local community about the future of St Mary's, I would recommend that the Council thanks the petitioner and local residents for raising their concerns and assures them that we are committed to exploring every opportunity to maintain services at the Centre.

REPORT ENDS

COUNCIL – 8 FEBRUARY 2024

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

Executive Summary

The Council is invited to consider the recommendations from the meetings of the Executive held on 18 January 2024 and 1 February 2024. The extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 18 January 2024 is set out below. The minutes of the meeting of the Executive on 1 February 2024 will be published in due course; in the meantime, the recommendations before the Executive are set out below.

THE EXECUTIVE – 18 JANUARY 2024

A. Community Asset Transfer Policy

The Executive received a report which recommended to Council the adoption of the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy. The Executive was advised that the Council was looking to local community organisations to run facilities such as community centres and sports pavilions, to enable the Council to create savings whilst retaining those assets for social benefit. The Leader highlighted that as community centres and sports pavilions were not considered statutory services by the Government, the Council would need to consider alternative ways to offer those facilities. It was noted that the CAT Policy had been drafted with support from Local Partnerships and the Local Government Association (LGA). The report also proposed a resource to allow the Council to work closely with local groups and help them through the CAT process, to be funded under proposals contained in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) item later on the agenda.

During the autumn public consultation on proposed service reduction, a number of community groups had expressed interest in the running of sports pavilions and community centres and discussions with those groups were ongoing. Examples of facilities being successfully run by the community in the Borough were highlighted, such as Old Woking Community Centre.

It was noted that a CAT Board would be established, consisting of appropriate Officers, which would identify assets for CAT and make decisions on expression of interest and business cases. Final decisions would be signed off by an Executive Member on an evidence basis.

The Executive welcomed the proposed Policy which would sustain valuable community assets, empower community enterprises and provide social and economic benefits for local areas. Due to the Council's financial situation, it was hoped to start CATs within the next year. The Executive thanked the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Nicholson and Officers for their hard work on drafting the CAT Policy.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted.

Reason: The Council has a number of assets that have the potential to be run by community organisations (referred to as community enterprises). This would enable the Council to create savings whilst the asset is retained for social benefit. Community Asset Transfers (CATs) also have the opportunity of supporting the Borough's voluntary and

community sector in their development and economic growth.

THE EXECUTIVE – 1 FEBRUARY 2024

B. General Fund Budget 2024-25 and Proposed Savings

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

- (i) the £8.4m of savings set out in Appendix 3b to the report be agreed;**
- (ii) the Equality Impact Assessment and public consultation processes on the savings proposals that are summarised in Appendix 5 to the report, with detailed reports on each resident facing saving proposal, be noted as part of the decision-making process; and**
- (iii) it be noted a further report to Full Council on 4 March 2024 will receive a final report from the Director of Finance to finalise the treatment of the Council's debt and Council Tax in 2024/25.**

Reasons for Decision

Reason: The contents of the report is to ensure open and transparent governance in the financial affairs of the Council in balancing the 2024/25 Budget.

C. Housing Revenue Account Budgets 2024-25

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

- (i) the Final Housing Revenue Account budgets for 2024-25, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed; and**
- (ii) with effect from 1 April 2024, rents be increased by 7.7%.**

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To approve the resources necessary to implement the Council's objectives for Housing and to enable the Council to determine charges to tenants for 2024/25.

D. Capital Programme 2023-24 to 2027-28

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

- (i) the Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2027/28 be approved subject to reports on projects where appropriate; and**
- (ii) the proposed financing arrangements be approved.**

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To recommend to Council that it approves the capital resources for 2023/24 onwards considered necessary to support the Council's service plans and objectives.

E. Future Of Brockhill

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

- (i) the closure of Brockhill Extra Care Housing be agreed;**
- (ii) the residents of Brockhill be offered suitable alternative accommodation which best meets their needs and preferences and be paid Statutory Home Loss and Disturbance payments, where eligible; and**
- (iii) authority be delegated to the Strategic Director - Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to make any further decisions required in respect of the closure.**

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To set out the future plans for Brockhill Extra Care Housing scheme and the support that will be available to impacted residents.

The Council has the authority to determine the recommendations set out above.

Background Papers: None.

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

Contact Person: Frank Jeffrey, Head of Democratic Services
Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3012

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

Date Published: 31 January 2024

REPORT ENDS

EXECUTIVE – 18 JANUARY 2024

COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER POLICY

Executive Summary

Community Asset Transfer involves transferring the ownership of land or buildings from a statutory body to a community organisation in order to achieve public benefit. This report recommends to Council the adoption of the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy which has been drafted with support from Local Partnerships and the Local Government Association (LGA), as well as with input from community representatives.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: The Council has a number of assets that have the potential to be run by community organisations (referred to as community enterprises). This would enable the Council to create savings whilst the asset is retained for social benefit. Community Asset Transfers (CATs) also have the opportunity of supporting the Borough's voluntary and community sector in their development and economic growth.

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

Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Louise Strongitharm, Strategic Director - Communities
Email: louise.strongitharm@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3599

Contact Person: Steve May, Head of Leisure and Communities
Email: steve.may@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3302

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ellen Nicholson
Email: cllreellen.nicholson@woking.gov.uk

Date Published: 10 January 2024

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is currently in discussions with community enterprises regarding the transfer of assets, which is made challenging by not having an existing framework or policy in place that has been formally agreed and adopted by the Council.
- 1.2 Many authorities conduct community asset transfers and have Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policies in place, and 8 different Council policies have been reviewed to inform the way forward for Woking Borough Council. The drafting of the policy has been supported by Local Partnerships with the support of the LGA, with input from community representatives the Council is currently working on for a CAT.

2.0 Key Considerations

- 2.1 A CAT is not an easy option, and takes effort and time to proceed with the community enterprise. Nevertheless, the rewards can be significant in a valued asset and service being retained under the control of the community.
- 2.2 The process needs to be fair, transparent and based on co-operation. The Council needs to be assured that the transfer of the asset it currently holds on behalf of the community is going to continue to provide that community benefit. If this due diligence did not take place, then the Council will be failing in its responsibilities to the Borough residents. However, the process does need to be proportionate to the scale and level of the asset, and not put community enterprises off by being too bureaucratic. The policy (in its tone and language) aims to be accessible and the Expression of Interest (Appendix 3) and Business Case (Appendix 4) templates not too onerous whilst providing the assurances the Council needs.
- 2.3 In accepting the policy, the Council agrees to the following objectives for CAT:
 1. CATs will be a route to sustaining valued community assets and enabling locally run services to thrive and flourish independent of council funding.
 2. CATs will be a vehicle for enabling and empowering community enterprises to directly operate assets and to support the growth and development of the third sector.
 3. CATs will foster social and economic benefits for the local area, focusing on social inclusion and be environmentally considerate.
- 2.4 At the outset the asset should be considered if right for transfer based on wider value to the community. For example, the selling of the site could be the best value option with the income generated to provide services for the whole Borough. The site should also be considered in terms of community need – if there is existing assets or services of equal quality and value then decommissioning the asset could be the better option.
- 2.5 The policy outlines the establishment of a CAT Board consisting of Officers from property, finance, legal and service representatives. They will use their collective expertise to decide if a CAT is the best route for an asset. Also, the Board would agree the progression of a CAT at the different stages including at Expression of Interest and Business Case.
- 2.6 The Council will also agree to the following commitments:
 - Work closely with community enterprises in a co-operative manner to achieve the best results for Woking.
 - Operate in a transparent way to ensure the community enterprise will have all the information it needs to make a decision to accept a transferred asset.

- Expect the community enterprise to respect the confidential nature of information and not share beyond those who need to know.
- Address any blockages in decision making and progressing with the CAT in a timely manner.
- The Council will expect the community enterprise to operate the same commitments.

2.7 These commitments are really important and would expect all parts of the Council to follow them in finding solutions and support the community enterprise in a timely manner.

2.8 Timescales for the different stages are included in the policy as a guide. This is to ensure the process and negotiations from either party does not drag – with a protracted timescale the asset may not meet its potential and a different option might have been better for the wider community. Also, the community enterprise nor the Council will have endless resources to apply to a CAT, and hence the policy only has 2 options for the community enterprise to submit an Expression of Interest and Business Case (which is fair as long as the Council is consistent with its approach and advice).

3.0 Summary

3.1 As mentioned above, the requirements of the community enterprise have been tested with the community representatives who are interested in a CAT. This proved extremely valuable, however, the policy is a guide and assets and community enterprises will have different requirements and needs – therefore a degree of flexibility is required.

3.2 A submission has been made to the UKSPF – this would provide funding for independent legal advice for the community enterprise at the business case stage (with parameters), cover other costs to each party, and it is suggested that a Community Broker be employed to ensure the CATs transfer in a timely manner (a job description is attached at Appendix 5).

4.0 Corporate Strategy

4.1 Community Asset Transfer supports the Woking for All objectives of both healthier and prosperous communities. Asset transfer can unlock community enterprise and volunteer commitment to enable continued access to important local facilities.

5.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

5.1 The policy sets out key financial and risk considerations that will need to be determined prior to any CAT taking place. The policy outlines the establishment of a CAT Board consisting of Officers from property, finance, legal and service representatives. They will use their collective expertise to decide if a CAT is the best route for an asset.

5.2 The policy sets out in detail the potential risks attached with CAT transfer and the solutions that will need to be in place to mitigate against these.

Equalities and Human Resources

5.3 All organisations applying for a CAT transfer will be asked to include equalities information in their business case.

5.4 The Council will deliver the CAT policy through the appointment of a Community Broker who will work with community organisations to facilitate the CAT process. This post will be funded through UK Shared Prosperity Funding.

Legal

- 5.5 The CAT Board will provide a legal oversight of any potential CAT transfers. It should be noted there is a general legal requirement to achieve best value in property transactions, a CAT transfer will not be considered where the option to sell would deliver greater value to the Council.
- 5.6 Heads of terms will be proportionate to the scale of the transfer, aiming to support the long-term success of the venture whilst also meeting the legal and statutory obligations.

6.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 6.1 A six-week public consultation on the proposed service reduction ran from October to November which gave residents and community stakeholders the opportunity to have their say on the proposed changes to services. In total, 5,792 responses were received.
- 6.2 A number of community groups (12) expressed interest in the management of pavilions (based on a Community Asset Transfer Scheme) subject to conditioning surveys of the pavilions.
- 6.3 The Council tested the draft CAT policy with one such Community Group, running through how it could work in practice.

REPORT ENDS

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Community Asset Transfer Policy and Guide

Appendix 2 – Community Asset Transfer Roadmap

Appendix 3 – Community Asset Transfer Expression of Interest

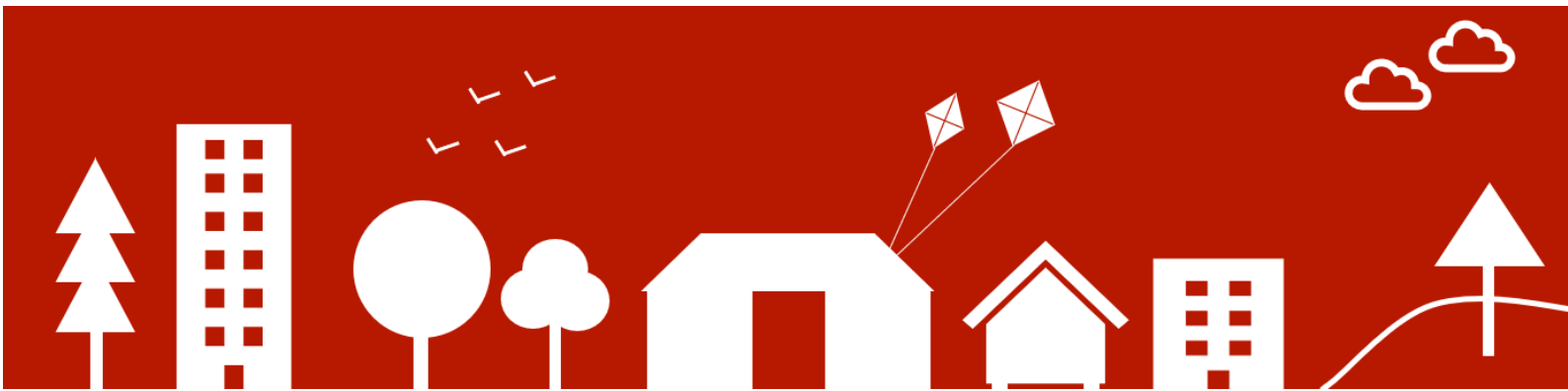
Appendix 4 – Community Asset Transfer Business Case

Appendix 5 – Community Broker Job Description



WOKING
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Community Asset Transfer Policy and Guide



12 December 2023

1. Introduction to this policy

This document provides the policy and guide to establishing Community Asset Transfers (CAT). CATs involve the transfer of a council asset to be operated by the community, usually on a long lease basis. This enables the community to take control in running assets to best meet local need and supports the voluntary and community sector to meet their growth ambitions. It also means the asset can be sustained and revitalised beyond the means of the council at a time of increased budget pressures.

This policy acts as a framework in managing an asset transfer based on circumstances and conditions under which the council will consider the transfer of its interest in a property or land. It also outlines the criteria of the community organisation as the receivers of the asset and includes the steps each party needs to take.

The policy should be used as a guide to both the local authority and the community organisation - the council needs to make sure it is proceeding in the right way based on the best option for the people of Woking, and the community organisation needs to ensure it has all the foundations in place to make the management of the asset a success. Though, to note, the community organisation should always seek independent professional advice when considering a CAT.

Collaboration is key and working in a transparent and open way will achieve the best results. The guidance set out in this policy aims to create an expected and consistent approach, though recognising each CAT will be unique based on the type of asset and the scale of the transfer.

The council's objectives are that:

1. CATs will be a route to sustaining valued community assets and enabling locally run services to thrive and flourish independent of council funding
2. CATs will be a vehicle for enabling and empowering community organisations to directly operate assets and to support the growth and development of the third sector
3. CATs will foster social and economic benefits for the local area, focusing on social inclusion and be environmentally considerate.

The policy reflects the intentions outlined in the [Woking for All](#) and 2022/23 [Supplementary and amended priorities](#), and in line with the Localism Bill 2011 which is the legislation that changes the powers of local government in England.

2. Statement of Commitment

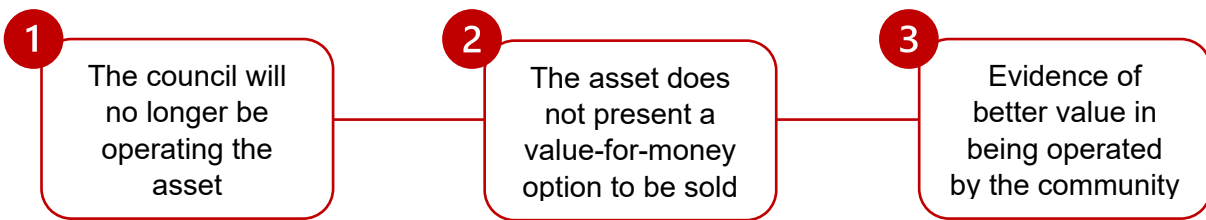
As part of its commitment to CATs the council will:

- Work closely with community organisations in a co-operative manner to achieve the best results for Woking
- Operate in a transparent way to ensure the community organisation will have all the information it needs to make a decision to accept a transferred asset
- Expect the community organisation to respect the confidential nature of information and not share beyond those who need to know
- Address any blockages in decision making and progressing with the CAT in a timely manner
- Expect the community organisation to operate the same commitments.

3. A CAT and its Benefit

A CAT is the transfer of a council-owned asset (usually land or buildings) to a community organisation at less than market value.. The community organisation would operate the asset as a way of continuing it without funding from the council due to budget pressures on discretionary services. Therefore, the aim is to achieve local social, economic or environmental benefit, usually by way of a long lease or in some limited circumstances a freehold transfer.

The council will consider a transfer based on one or a combination of the circumstances:



The council views CAT positively in providing the benefits as listed below.

The potential benefits of asset transfer for the community organisation include:

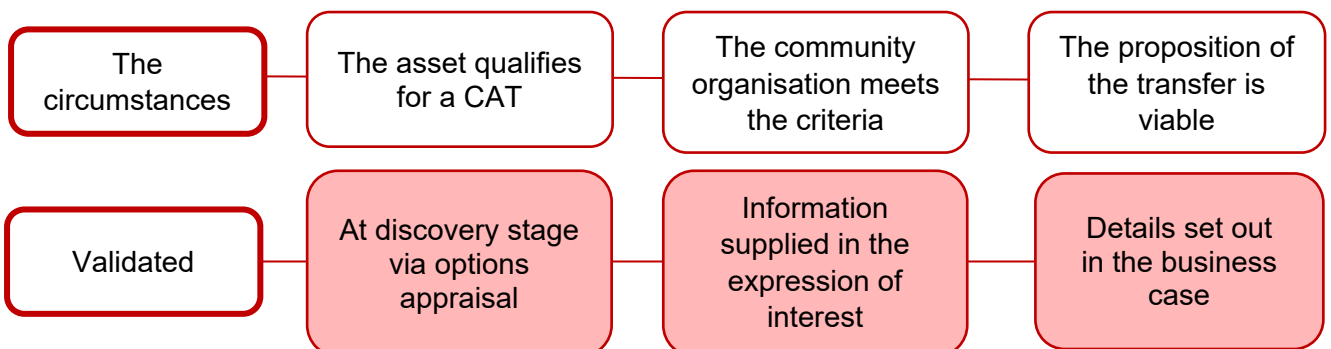
- Providing an opportunity for community organisations to grow and meet their ambitions
- Creating opportunities for income and funding to reinvest in the asset to support its sustainability
- Securing the asset to meet the community need and aspirations in line with the purpose of the community organisation.

The potential benefits of asset transfer for the council include:

- Creating the opportunity for investment in the asset that may not be possible within council ownership
- Providing a catalyst for regeneration of an area that is based on a partnership approach between sectors
- Contributing to the council’s objective to rationalise its estate and facilitate more effective use of its assets when led by the community.

4. The circumstances for a CAT

The circumstances for a CAT are based on three factors:



4.1. When the asset qualifies for a CAT all the following apply:

1. The legal power exists to allow the council to transfer assets under the 'general power of disposal' and transfer of the asset would not be contrary to any obligation placed on the council
2. The asset will no longer be operated by the council, which has been tested through an options appraisal which takes into consideration current and long-term use, future investment value and value through being sold
3. The transfer of the asset will remove recurrent expenditure from the council that it would ordinarily have to incur and remove financial / non-financial liabilities
4. The council would not generate a rental income from the asset that would outweigh a community benefit
5. The asset is fit for transfer or an understanding that the transfer takes place knowing the liabilities
6. The transfer abides by the Commercial Protocols of the council.

4.2. When the community organisation meets the criteria when operating the CAT:

1. Be a Woking based community organisation or if not actually based in the area have a demonstrable track record of creating social benefit in the Woking borough
2. Have the appropriate constitution in place or demonstrate it will be operational at the time of community transfer e.g. registered charity, community interest company or charitable incorporated organisation, not-for-profit company or co-operative, co-operative and community benefit societies
3. The constitution allows for the management of assets to operate for public good resulting in social, economic and/or environmental benefits for the people of Woking
4. Have the current or planned capacity to manage the asset and have directors, management committee members and/or employees who have the necessary experience and skills in place at the point of the community transfer
5. Complies with relevant equal opportunities legislation in its work and recruitment/employment of staff - embraces diversity and works to improve community cohesion
6. Complies with all statutory requirements in operating a community asset (including safeguarding) including Charity Commission and/or Companies House requirements.

4.3. Proposition of the transfer is viable:

1. Can demonstrate community need – therefore evidence of local consultation and involvement in designing the proposition in receiving the asset. This can be through letters of support, resident's forums, surveys, etc.
2. When based on a well defined business case that demonstrates financial sustainability and viable management arrangements; large scale transfers (with a planned turnover of £100k and over) presenting the proposition in a business plan alongside the business case
3. When based on an inclusive approach to people using the asset, or targeted activity for participants with evidenced need
4. It does not duplicate activities and compliments services or facilities already present in the local community and provides evidence enhancement of the neighbourhood e.g. supporting letters

5. Include key performance indicators (KPIs) in the business case in which success can be measured.

4.4. When a CAT would not be transferred:

1. When the asset is still needed for the council to directly deliver services, or the option to sell provides greater value to the wider community
2. If the community organisation applying to take on the asset cannot demonstrate an additional community benefit or viable business case
3. If the community organisation does not fit the criteria as outlined in this policy
4. If the community organisation applying to take on the asset was operating a function or activities that does not accord with the objectives of the council
5. When community assets have been acquired by compulsory purchase on behalf of a third party
6. Where an organisation is intending to operate the asset to generate a commercial gain without reinvestment plans
7. If the community organisation operates solely for faith, religious or political purposes
8. When covenant restrictions do not allow for the transfer
9. When the expiry date for transfer as agreed has passed
10. Where a community organisation has breached confidentiality, or acting in a way that is not open, transparent or is intentionally misleading the council.

If the council decides to halt the asset transfer after an expression of interest has been submitted it will outline the reasons why based on the previous points.

When there is more than one community organisation interested in the same asset (part or whole) then the highest score business case will proceed. The unsuccessful community organisation will be informed as to why their business case did not score as well.

5. How the lease will Operate

The council will be as flexible as possible when designing lease clauses to recognise the value of assets being transferred. The heads of terms will be proportionate to the scale of the transfer, aiming to support the long-term success of the venture whilst also meeting the legal, statutory and operational obligations and duty of care for the users of the transferred asset.

Leases will be accompanied by a Service Agreement that will set out the agreed minimum standards, opening hours and activities, and how these will be measured and monitored. This agreement will include the intentions as outlined in the business case with KPIs so success can be measured against the decision to transfer the asset. The council will be open to reasonable revisions based on changing circumstances but changes will need to be agreed in advance, and may need to be formally accepted through the council's governance.

5.1. Maintaining the Asset

Depending on the asset and the circumstance of the community organisation a lease will be between three and 25 years - a lease longer may be appropriate if supported by a business case that demonstrates specific conditions or requirements from funders or lenders. A freehold transfer will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

As previously outlined, once granted a lease can be extended or restructured at a future stage to meet changed activities or circumstances.

The asset will be transferred for a rental value which will vary depending on the asset. The rental value will be communicated to the community organisation in advance of submitting the business case.

The lease will be based on Full Repairing and Insuring (FRI), meaning that the community organisation taking on the asset will be responsible for all the repairs and maintenance from the date of transfer. This will include being responsible and liable for all operations of the asset.

There will be an Asset Lock in the lease that prevents the asset from being sold for unintended financial gain and the loss of the agreed benefits. Leases will contain suitable clauses to ensure the return of the asset to the council if the terms of the service agreement are not met, or in the case of dissolution, insolvency or corruption by the community organisation and its representatives.

The asset must be maintained by the community organisation to at least the same standard as is currently provided or better if part of an investment plan. As part of the maintenance it will need to be compliant with all planning, licensing and other relevant regulations and have in place all appropriate insurances for fire, wet peril, inclement weather, theft, public liability etc.

Any proposed major investment works would require the council's prior approval, the purpose being to ensure that the property remains suitable for the use for which it was released or any subsequently agreed variation. As the asset remains in the ownership of the council the value will remain on the balance sheet of the council, rather than the community organisation. As operators of the asset the community organisation will be liable for the rates where relevant.

Throughout the duration of the lease, the council reserves the right to monitor the running of the asset in line with the asset transfer agreement.

Leases will be contracted out of the security of tenure provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 to give the council the flexibility to determine the future use and disposal of its property.

5.2. Ceasing the Lease

The council will support the community organisation to succeed in the operation of the transferred asset. However, if the community organisation should unfortunately be wound up or liquidated the council will be the interested party to regain possession of the asset. The council can terminate the lease should the property not be used for the purpose for which it was transferred, unless such changes have been formally agreed in writing. The return of the asset will happen if:

1. The asset is not being maintained as agreed
2. The benefit to the community (as set out in the business case and agreements) is not being delivered
3. The use of the asset has been changed without the prior written permission of the council
4. Any element of the asset has been sub-let to a third party without prior written permission of the council
5. Any illegal activity is found being undertaken from the asset
6. A commercial gain is not being invested in the transferred asset

7. The community organisation faces dissolution and insolvency or found to be corrupt, not operating in the best interest of the community or having questionable standards of behaviour (including its individual representatives)
8. If specific terms of the lease have been breached e.g. insufficient insurance or indemnity cover.

At the end of any lease the council will expect the property to be returned in the condition that it was made available taking into account reasonable wear and tear.

The community organisation should take appropriate professional advice as to the condition, future repairs and maintenance liabilities and premises management requirements.

6. CAT Governance

The council will have in place a CAT Board. This will consist of representatives from property, legal and financial services plus relevant directorate representatives. It will meet at different stages of the CAT process, with its role centring on:

- Identifying premises suitable for a CAT
- Ensuring communication to services and directorates that an asset will no longer be run by the council and responding to cases for retaining the asset
- Response to a community organisation that has presented an asset suitable for CAT
- Assessing the expression of interest, and agreeing to proceed to business case submission or rejection giving clear reasons why
- Assessing the business case to agree, outline where further work may be needed or to reject, again giving clear reasons for any rejection
- Forming the recommendations for an executive decision including outlining bespoke elements needed within the lease and agreement.

The decision to transfer the asset will be made by the member executive or relevant member portfolio holder based on recommendations from officers once the business case has been agreed through due process (council members will not be involved in any aspects of the negotiation process to transfer the asset to ensure impartiality).

The council will assign a lead contact officer during the process of transferring the asset and support ongoing relations when the asset has been transferred. The community organisation will make the same arrangement of having a single point of contact.

The CAT will be operated without interference from the council, though the council will want to know that the intentions of the asset transfer are being delivered in accordance with the agreed business case and lease. Therefore, the council lead may attend the committee / board of the community organisation as an observer and receive board papers. Also, the council and community organisation will agree a proportionate reporting regime based on an annual report with accounts to be published, with the option of conducting spot-checks and audits for justifiable reasons.

The council and community organisation will agree a communications plan and protocol, with any press and social media on the asset transfer acknowledging the contribution from the council.

Any council party (officer and member) will have to declare an interest relevant to the transfer or community organisation. If an executive member is on the board or has links to

the community organisation the decision making on awarding the transfer will need to pass to another executive member or abstain and leave the meeting from voting if the decision is via committee.

A ward member can be key in letting the community know when an asset has the potential to be a CAT. Where there is more than one community organisation interested in a CAT, the ward member(s) need to be impartial and give equal support to each party.

7. Process for establishing a CAT

The process for establishing a CAT is outlined in more detail in Appendix 2, and outlined in this section based on five stages including the headline requirements of the council and the community organisation.



7.1. Discovery

The purpose of this stage is to identify assets suitable for CAT.

The council responsibilities include:	The community organisation responsibilities include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Options appraisal for assets viable for CAT or consider proposition from the community ▪ Ensure assets are no longer needed by council services – including consultation with departments ▪ CAT Board to decide the release of assets as potential CAT ▪ Promote an asset as available as a CAT ▪ To understand if any TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) arrangements would apply. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify property for CAT ▪ Form initial approaches on how the asset would be used and managed ▪ Consider the CAT policy in line with the intentions for the asset ▪ Gather initial evidence of need ▪ Approach the council for initial discussions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joint activity: Have an initial meeting to outline the requirements in the expression of interest, to outline any TUPE implication, planning restrictions and covenants on the asset. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decision: To proceed or not to the expression of interest stage. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documentation: CAT Policy for guidance and reference. 	

Whether an asset is considered suitable by the council for a CAT (either through an internal options appraisal or via an approach from a community organisation) the potential CAT will be listed on the council webpage.

7.2. Expression of interest

The purpose of this stage is to develop an early outline of the intentions of the CAT.

The council responsibilities include:	The community organisation responsibilities include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ First check of the expression of interest by lead officer – advising the community organisation if there are elements missing ▪ Appraisal of the expression of interest at the CAT Board ▪ Inform the community organisation of the outcome of the appraisal – either more work needed or rejection ▪ Outline briefing to the senior management, executive members and ward members on the progress of the CAT. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete the expression of interest ensuring that outline requirements are completed and in place ▪ Refine the expression of interest based on feedback ▪ Conduct consultation with the community if not already taken place.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joint activity: Discussion on where the expression of interest could be improved. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decision: To proceed or not to the business case stage. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documentation: Evaluation form for expression of interest; expression of interest templates to be completed by the community organisation. 	

The community organisation will have two opportunities to submit an expression of interest to the council with the second one based on suggested improvements from the CAT board.

7.3. Business case

The purpose of this stage is to document the case for transferring the asset.

The council responsibilities include:	The community organisation responsibilities include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide all information based on management of the asset including financial details, condition surveys, liabilities. ▪ Share draft terms of agreement/lease so the community organisation knows what to expect ▪ Appraisal of the business case at the CAT Board ▪ Inform the community organisation of the outcome of the appraisal ▪ Review any appeal or resubmission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete the business case template ensuring that all the key requirements are completed and in place, with business plan over the threshold ▪ Seek external advice and support ▪ Commission condition survey if not up to date ▪ Submit the business case, resubmit on feedback if inclined ▪ If inclined, submit an appeal against a “no” decision.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joint activity: Joint interest in sharing information and agreeing on a time scale; keep in contact with how the CAT is progressing and jointly troubleshoot issues. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decision: To recommend award of the CAT or not. 	

The council responsibilities include:	The community organisation responsibilities include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documentation: Business case template to be completed by the community organisation; evaluation form for business case to be completed by the council. Supporting information – budgets, ground and condition surveys etc. 	

The content of the business case is extremely important as it will form the basis of the lease and the agreement, along with the information provided used to form the executive decision to proceed with the CAT.

In cases where there are two or more groups interested in an asset (whole or in part) these will be selected based on the content of the business case. A separate business plan is needed for any property with a turn-over of £100k.

The community organisation will have two opportunities to submit a business case – the second based on feedback from the CAT board. The appeals process, if needed, will be routed through the council’s complaints process.

7.4 Award and Mobilise

The purpose of this stage is to agree to the CAT and put in place requirements for operation of the asset.

The council responsibilities include:	The community organisation responsibilities include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agree on the CAT through formal governance with published report ▪ Finalise the legal agreements and monitoring regime ▪ Ensure the property is in good order before transfer and/or the full liabilities are known and agreed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formal agreement by the board of trustees or equivalent (documented for evidence if needed) ▪ Confirm legal compliance with external advice ▪ Ensure management arrangements are in place, insurance and any contracting arrangements ▪ Compliance with legislation confirmed, e.g. health and safety.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joint activity: Sign the legally binding agreements. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decision: Formal decision to award the CAT and agreement by the community organisation board. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documentation: Legal agreements signed by parties. 	

7.5. Operation and Change

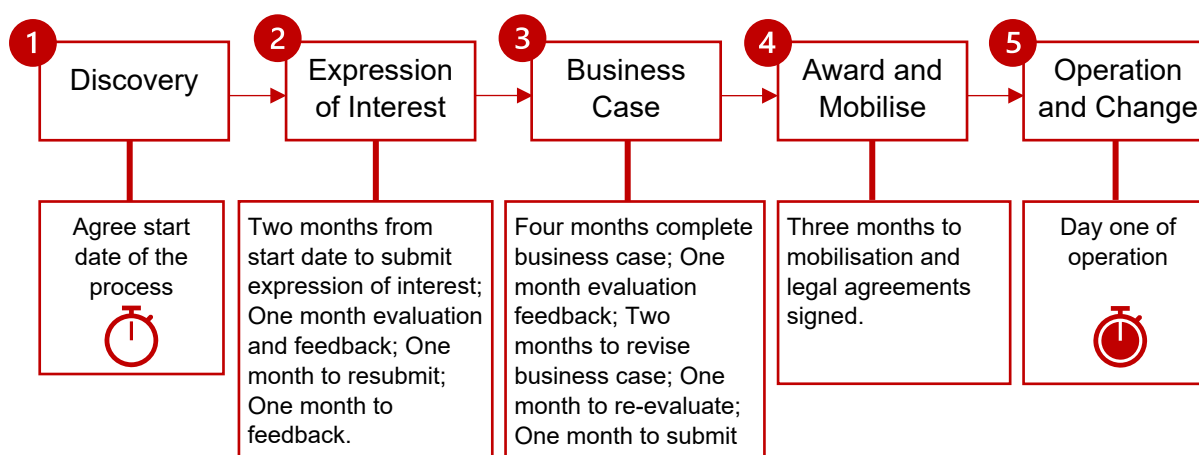
The purpose of this stage is to run the community asset transfer and agree change if needed.

The council responsibilities include:	The community organisation responsibilities include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor performance through KPIs set out in the business case 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver objectives and activities outlined in the business case

The council responsibilities include:	The community organisation responsibilities include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide guidance to support the community organisation if needed ▪ Complete monitoring visits and audits ▪ Agree (or not) to altering the agreements/lease based on change of circumstances and requirements ▪ Decide to terminate the lease based on points within this policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide annual monitoring reports to the council that are published for transparency ▪ Report any change in circumstances or activity to the council, particularly that alters the business case.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joint activity: Promote asset transfer and the joint venture; work in partnership to ensure the CAT is a success 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decision: Consider any change presented by the community organisation. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documentation: KPI reporting by the community organisation. 	

7.6. The Schedule

It is important the process for the community asset transfer remains on track otherwise there could be a missed opportunity to use the asset, Also, both the council and the community organisation will have finite resources to allocate to the process.



8. Funding a CAT

The CAT could be transferred on the understanding that work is required by the community organisation to make it fit for use and development.

Once transferred, there will not be any recurrent funding available from the council for future repairs and maintenance or running costs of the asset.

The council will be willing to provide evidence of community transfer to a funder, investor and sponsor. The community organisation should confirm in writing details of funders, sponsors and investors etc. to ensure the sponsor is in line with the council's values – if considered not appropriate the council will outline the reasons why.

9. Risk and Solutions

There will inevitably be issues that arise as the council and the community organisation traverse the process of delivering the CAT. Below are some possible risks and potential solutions.

Possible Risks	Potential Solutions
The council is requiring too much of a community organisation in the establishment of the CAT.	Be proportionate in the requirements recognising the scale and size of the asset transfer.
The community organisation is not ready to take on the asset but is interested in a CAT.	To be well prepared for the requirements of a CAT, including being a registered organisation with a relevant constitution.
Community organisation does not have the capacity /skills to take over and manage the asset.	Understand the community organisation might need a development plan to have the right people in place and the business case could include recruitment of new board members and staff.
The full liabilities of taking on the asset are not known by the parties.	Ensure up-to-date condition and land surveys; along with full disclosure of the current running costs. Community organisation to ensure it has independent advice.
Community organisation does not have the finances in place to run the community asset.	Sound financial planning is put in place, including ways of generating income and grants that can be used to reinvest in the asset.
There is more than one community organisation interested in an asset.	The submitted business cases will be assessed fairly, but need to ensure all community organisations agree the time scale.
Not sure of the legal position of staff the council currently employs to run services at the asset being transferred.	If the services are to remain then TUPE would need to be applied; if the services will not be operated in the future the council will need to run a dismissal / redeployment process for the employees.
Once operational it becomes clear the business case as set out is not viable, or there are unforeseen costs.	Every support will be given to ensure the CAT is a success, though the council needs to be realistic in what can be achieved. Changes can be made to a degree through a revised decision or the asset is returned to the council.
Funders and investors require a long lease or freehold.	The council to be open minded to alter lease terms based on a strong case.
If the CAT fails funders expect to have ownership of the asset.	It is made clear in agreements between the council and the community organisation, and between the community organisation and the funder that the asset under leasehold reverts to the council.
The community organisation and the council do not see eye to eye on lease terms or process.	Both parties operate in an open and collaborative manner; with regular dialogue. Potential for mediation, or realisation that the parties have different intentions which would stop the CAT proceeding.

Possible Risks	Potential Solutions
Poor business case that does not outline the requirements to make an informed decision.	The lead officer to work with the community organisation requirements for the business case. The community organisation has two chances to submit the business case.
The council does not have sufficient capacity either financially or through personnel to support the CAT transfer and monitoring.	Resources are allocated within the council but with also clear expectations of the support the council can provide and time spent on the steps and stages.
There is significant damage to the property when operating as a CAT.	The community organisation needs to have relevant insurance in place with the council ceasing to have responsibility for the liabilities.

Glossary and references

Item	Link for definition
Asset Lock	An asset lock is a legal clause that prevents the assets of a company from being used for private gain rather than the stated purposes of the organisation.
CAT	Community Asset Transfer is a process that allows a community organisation to take over publicly-owned land or buildings in a way that recognises the public benefits
CAT board	Woking Council Community Asset Board to identify assets for CAT and make decisions on expression of interest and business cases.
Charities Commission	About us - The Charity Commission - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Community building	A free-standing building that is managed, occupied or used primarily by the voluntary and community sector and where community-led activities for community benefit are the primary use of the building.
Community organisation	A community led organisation (also see third sector).
Companies House	Companies House - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Covenant	A provision contained in a deed to an asset that affects or limits its use.
Discretionary services	Services the council does not have a legal obligation to run.
Freehold	A form of ownership of land or buildings where ownership cannot be taken away from the owner unless they agree. This is the most permanent way in which someone can own land or buildings. The owner owns the property forever, or until they sell it or give it away. They do not have to pay anyone for the use of the land and buildings.
Full Repairing and Insuring (FRI)	A type of commercial lease in which the tenant is responsible for the cost of all repairs and upkeep of the property, as well as the cost of buildings insurance. The tenant is also responsible for insuring the property against damage or loss.
Governance	A process for decision making.
Heads of terms	A list of the main terms upon which the formal Community Asset Transfer will be based.

Item	Link for definition
Key performance indicators (KPIs)	Set of measures to illustrate performance next to intentions.
Lease	An agreement between landlord and tenant granting the tenant the right to possess the leasehold property subject to payment of rent.
Leasehold	A form of land ownership that the tenant holds from a landlord for a limited number of years.
Management committee	Members of community organisation governing body (who may be called trustees, directors, members of the management committee).
Peppercorn rent	Minimal rent paid to keep a claim, or title, in force.
Restrictive covenant	A covenant acknowledged in a deed or lease that restricts the free use or occupancy of property.
Public Asset	A building or piece of land owned by a public sector body (government department or agency, local authority).
Third sector	The voluntary or community sector, not-for-profit organisation including community interest company and cooperative and community benefit societies.
TUPE	Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment. TUPE regulations protect rights as an employee when services transferred to a new employer.

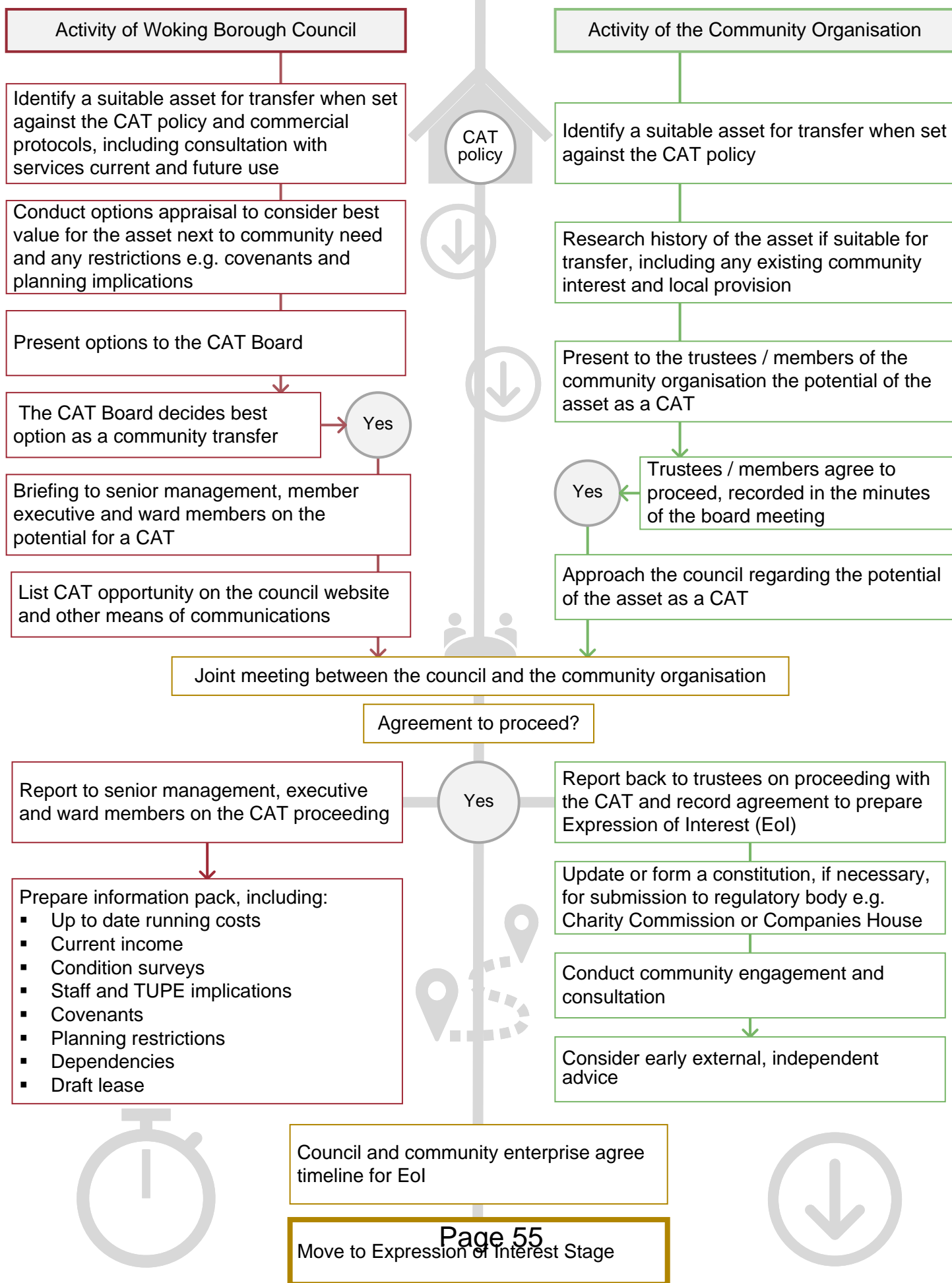
Appendix 1 – Community organisation Checklist

The following list aims to provide useful information for the community organisation when taking on a transferred asset. Most areas should already be covered in a constitution, and be proportionate to the scale of the asset being transferred. To note the requirements may not currently be in place, but in place at the time of the transfer.

Check	Requirement
<input type="checkbox"/>	We know the asset - its history, any liabilities e.g. flooding, contaminated land, building plans
<input type="checkbox"/>	We are a registered, non-for-profit organisation
<input type="checkbox"/>	We have the appropriate constitution with the appropriate registrations in place
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our constitution allows the management / ownership of buildings and provision of community based activities
<input type="checkbox"/>	We can demonstrate good governance by operating through open and accountable processes, with adequate monitoring, evaluation and financial management
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our trustees / directors / management committee members understand their legal obligations
<input type="checkbox"/>	We have written policies covering payment of trustees / directors / management committee members and volunteers
<input type="checkbox"/>	We can demonstrate we have the skills and capacity required to run the asset of this scale or have a development plan in place
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our roles and responsibilities are set out including powers to make decisions in our constitution or associated policies
<input type="checkbox"/>	We have a conflict of interest register
<input type="checkbox"/>	We have a reserves policy, have procedures for paying/reclaiming the correct amounts of tax, NI and VAT
<input type="checkbox"/>	We can provide copies of the accounts of the organisation
<input type="checkbox"/>	We have a clear purpose and understanding of the activities we wish to deliver
<input type="checkbox"/>	We have a track record of creating social benefit for the people of Woking
<input type="checkbox"/>	We have conducted consultation on our plans for the local area
<input type="checkbox"/>	We embrace diversity and work to improve community cohesion and reduce inequalities
<input type="checkbox"/>	We can evidence number of years established
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our management proposal includes a specific plan on health and safety issues and compliance with legislation and any statutory requirements arising from ownership or management of the building asset and the activity provided as part of it
<input type="checkbox"/>	We have all the necessary insurances in place or they are in plan
<input type="checkbox"/>	We know how the asset will be managed day to day that doesn't just rely on one person, including having repair and maintenance arrangements in place along with safety and security
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our governance structures are in place that rely on more than just a few people
<input type="checkbox"/>	We understand the terms of the lease and received independent legal advice
<input type="checkbox"/>	We know our digital requirements including IT security
<input type="checkbox"/>	We have all the required policies in place including where appropriate safeguarding, continuity plans, charging policy, complaints procedure, membership scheme criteria
<input type="checkbox"/>	We understand the statutory considerations that can include but are not limited to:- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974; Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005; Occupiers Liability Act 1957; Landlord & Tenant Act 1954; Charities Act 2011; Town & Country Planning Act 1960 and subsequent regulations; Equality Act 2010; Building Act 1994; Defective Premises Act 1972; Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.

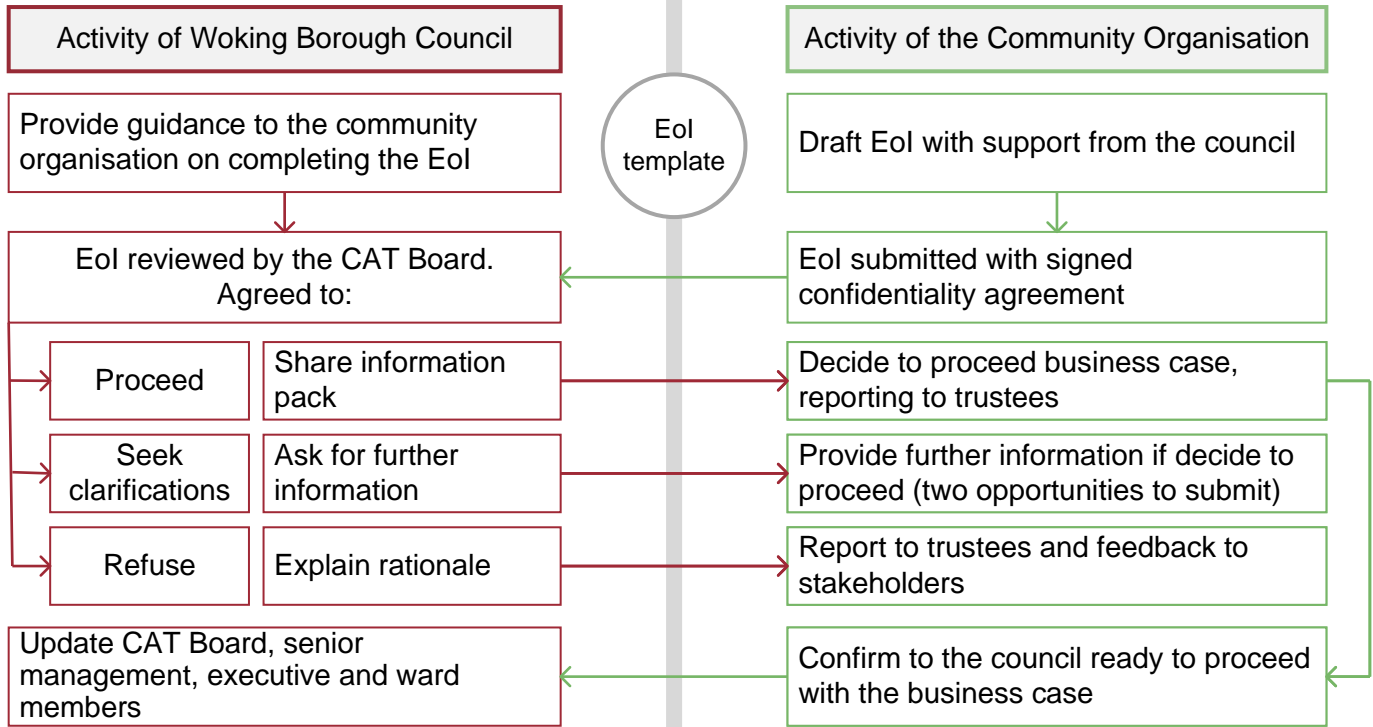


Discovery Stage





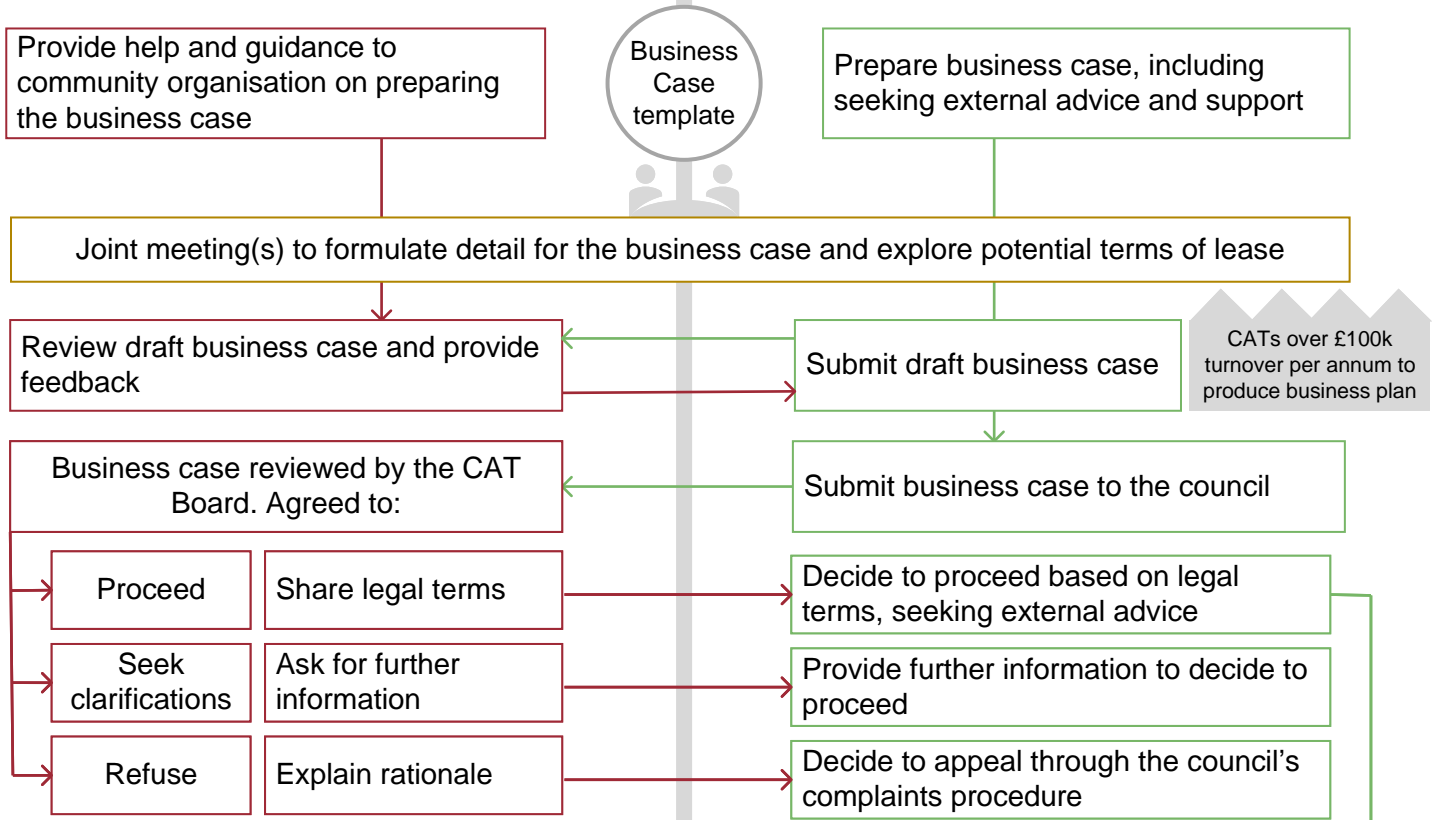
Express of Interest Stage



Move to Business Case Stage, agreeing timeline for business case submission(s) including with multiple community enterprises interested in the CAT



Business Case Stage

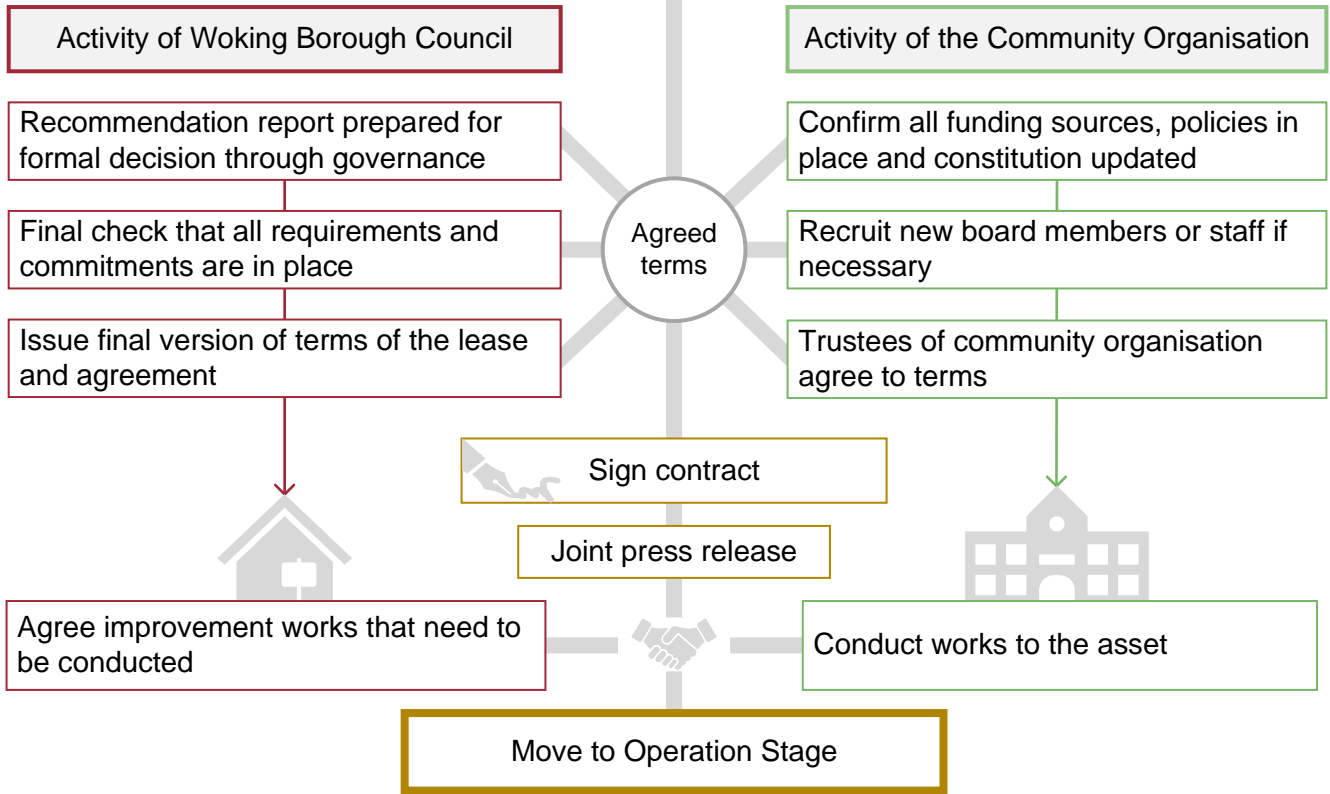


If multiple submissions the highest scoring business case proceeds

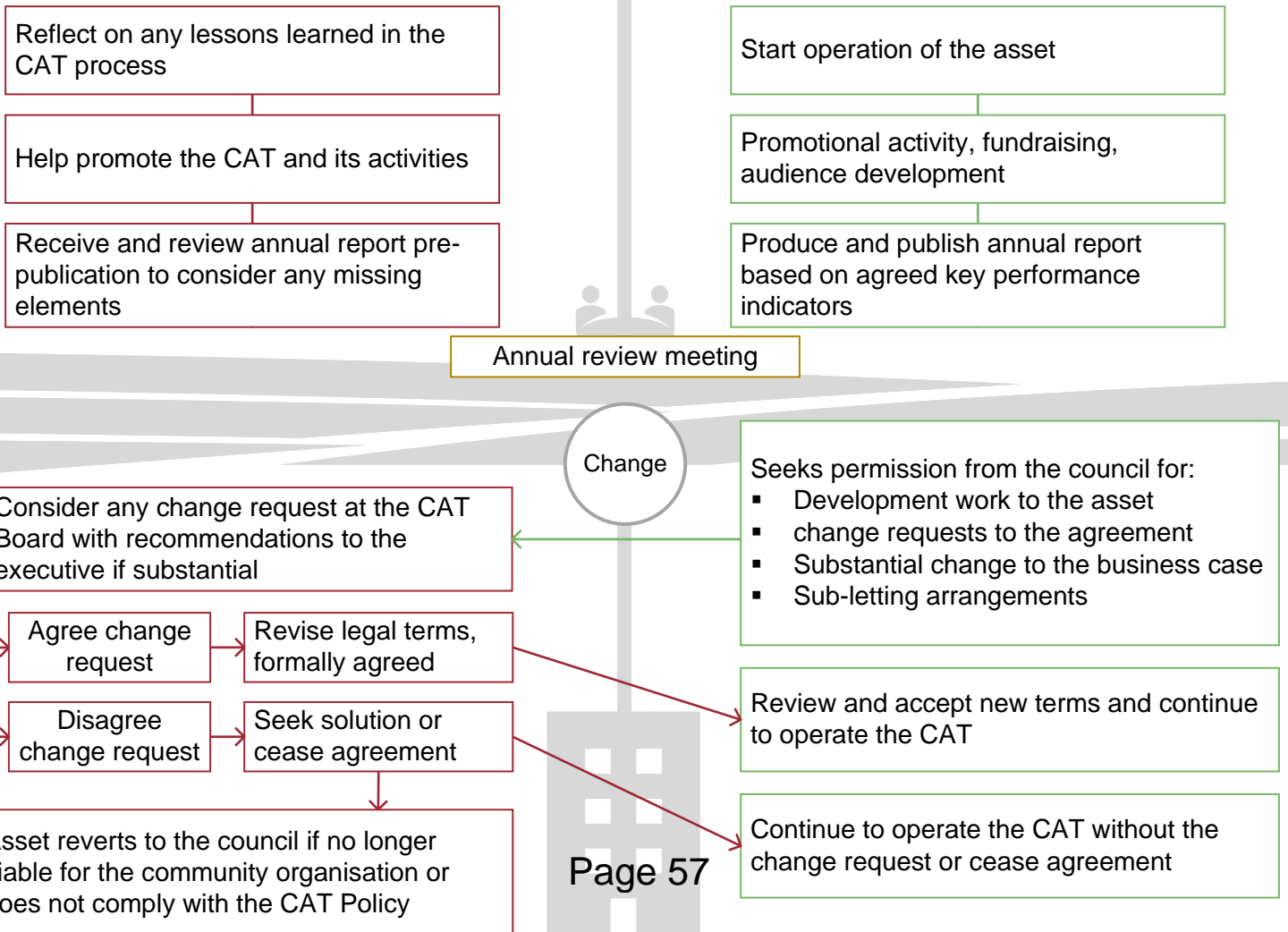
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Move to Mobilisation Stage



Award and Mobilisation Stage



Operation Stage including Change





Community Asset Transfer Expression of Interest

1. Your details and the asset

Name of the asset subject to CAT:	
Name of the community organisation:	
Type of constituted community organisation:	
Registration number (and where registered):	
Registered address of the community organisation:	
Name of contact for the community organisation:	
Role / title of the contact:	
Email of the contact:	
Telephone of the contact:	
Name of the asset subject to CAT:	
Address of the asset subject to CAT:	

2. Profile of Community Organisation

2.1 Overview of your community organisation (no more than 300 words)				
2.2 Objectives of the community organisation (as outlined in your constitution if relevant)				
2.3 Does your community organisation meet these statements? Planned is based on being in place at the point of the transfer.	yes	planned	no	Please give details if the answer is no:
We are a Woking based community organisation or have a track record of providing social benefit in the borough.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
We are appropriately constituted e.g. registered charity, community interest company or charitable incorporated organisation, non-for-profit organisation, co-operative or cooperative and community benefit society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
We can evidence good governance, robust financial systems, and all necessary policies expected of a community organisation (provided through constitution).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Our constitution allows for the management of assets to operate for public good resulting in social, economic or environmental benefits to the local community in the borough.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
We can demonstrate a track record in asset management of the scale proposed, having in place all the correct requirements e.g. licences, permissions, and insurance cover.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
We have the capacity to manage the asset and have directors, committee members or staff who have the necessary experience and skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
The income we generate through the asset will be invested back into the asset as part of capital improvements or in community activity directly linked to the asset.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organisation complies with relevant equal opportunities legislation in its work and recruitment / employment of staff - embraces diversity and works to improve community cohesion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
We comply with requirements of our regulatory body e.g. Charity Commission and/or Companies House.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
We have safeguarding policies in place.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

3. Proposition for CAT

3.1 Please give an outline of plans for the asset (max 400 words).	
3.4 How the asset complements other services or assets in the neighbourhood (max. 200 words).	
3.5 If the asset and its planned activities will compete with other services please explain why the provision is needed. Include n/a if not relevant. (max 200 words).	
3.6 Council Objectives of CAT.	How does the proposition meet the council's objectives for CAT (max. 100 words for each section).
CATs will be a route to sustaining valued community assets and enabling locally run services to thrive and flourish independent of council funding.	
CATs will be a vehicle for enabling and empowering community organisations to directly operate	

assets and to support the growth and development of the third sector.	
CATs will foster social and economic benefit for the local area, focusing on social inclusion and be environmentally considerate.	

4. Authorisation

Authorities by the chairperson (or equivalent) of the board of trustees to agree to the submission of this business case for CAT.

Name of chairperson or equivalent:	
Role within the Community Organisation:	
Email contact:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have read Woking Borough Council's CAT policy and agree to the points within it
<input type="checkbox"/>	I agree that the organisation I represent meets the community organisation criteria

You are welcome to provide a copy of your constitution.



Community Asset Transfer Business Case



1. Summary

Name of the asset subject to CAT:		Ref no:
Address of the asset subject to CAT:		
Name of the community organisation:		
Type of constituted community organisation:		
Registration number (and where registered):		
Registered address of the community organisation:		
Name of contact for the community organisation:		
Role / title of the contact:		
Email of the contact:		
Telephone of the contact:		
Type of asset transfer being requested	Choose an item.	
Estimated value of the transfer property:	Choose an item.	
Where leasehold – requested period		
An expression of interest has been approved by the council?	Choose an item.	

2. Profile of Community Organisation

2.1 Overview of your community organisation (no more than 300 words)				
2.2 Objectives of the community organisation (as outlined in your constitution)				
2.3 Does your community organisation meet these statements? Planned is based on being in place at the point of the transfer.	yes	planned	no	Please give details if the answer is no:
We are a Woking based community organisation or have a track record of providing social benefit in the borough.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
We are appropriately constituted e.g. registered charity, community interest company or charitable incorporated organisation, non-for-profit organisation, co-	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

operative or cooperative and community benefit society.				
Our constitution allows for the management of assets to operate for public good resulting in social, economic or environmental benefits to the local community in the borough.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
We have the capacity to manage the asset and have directors, committee members or staff who have the necessary experience and skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organisation complies with relevant equal opportunities legislation in its work and recruitment/ employment of staff - embraces diversity and works to improve community cohesion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
We comply with requirements of our regulatory body e.g. Charity Commission and/or Companies House.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
We have safeguarding policies in place.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

3. Proposition for CAT

3.1 Please give an outline of plans for the asset including capital refurbishment (max 400 words).	
3.2 Outline what is the basis of your plans including public engagement with summary of consultation data (max 300 words, and attached findings from consultation).	
3.3 State how the CAT support the development plans and ambitions of the community organisation (max 300 words).	
3.4 How the asset complements other services or assets in the neighbourhood, evidenced by supporting letters (max. 200 words).	
3.5 If the asset and its planned activities will compete with other services please explain why the provision is needed. Include n/a if not relevant. (max 200 words).	
3.6 Outline the reason for freehold request or the reason for the period of leasehold (max 300 words).	
Choose an item.	
3.7 Council Objectives of CAT	How the proposition meet the council's objectives for CAT? (max. 100 words for each section)
CATs will be a route to sustaining valued community assets and enabling locally run services to thrive and flourish independent of council funding.	

CATs will be a vehicle for enabling and empowering community organisations to directly operate assets and to support the growth and development of the third sector.	
CATs will foster social and economic benefit for the local area, focusing on social inclusion and be environmentally considerate.	

4. How the CAT will be managed and operated

4.1 Describe how the asset will be managed on a day-to-day basis, e.g. arrangement for site management, including staffing and tenants (max 400 words).	
4.2 Outline the governance of the CAT e.g. the management board and strategic decision making (max 300 words).	
4.3 Provide details of key activity and how will people get involved (max 400 words, can include a programme of activity as supporting evidence).	
4.4 Summarise the engagement plan to retain existing users and new audiences, including engaging difficult to reach groups (max 400 words, can include an engagement plan as supporting evidence).	
4.5 The outcomes and impacts of the CAT.	Key performance indicators for measuring success (next to the outcomes and impacts).

5. Financial Forecasts

Please provide complete the below summary revenue tabled reflective of the cashflow attached; and a capital income and expenditure, again supported by more a more detailed attachment.

5.1 Summary revenue		Year 1 £,000	Year 2 £,000	Year 3 £,000	Year 4 £,000	Total
Revenue Costs	Cost 1:					
	Cost 2:					
	Cost 3:					
	Cost 4:					
	Cost 5:					
	Cost 6:					
Total cost						
Revenue Income (inc.	Income 1:					
	Income 2:					

savings)	Income 3:					
	Income 4:					
	Income 5:					
	Income 6:					
Total income						
Net surplus/loss (cost less income)						

5.2 Summary capital		Year 1 £,000	Year 2 £,000	Year 3 £,000	Year 4 £,000	Total
Capital Costs (inc. investment)	Cost 1: Choose an item.					
	Cost 2: Choose an item.					
	Cost 3: Choose an item.					
	Cost 4: Choose an item.					
	Cost 5: Choose an item.					
	Cost 6: Choose an item.					
Total cost						
Capital Income (inc. grant status)	Income 1: Choose an item.					
	Income 2: Choose an item.					
	Income 3: Choose an item.					
	Income 4: Choose an item.					
	Income 5: Choose an item.					
	Income 6: Choose an item.					
Total income						
Net capital cost (cost less income)						

5.1 Note on revenue income and expenditure (max 300 words).
5.2 Notes on capital income and expenditure (max 300 words).

6. Additional Information

Please Outline key risks and mitigation in operating the CAT.

Risk	Likely	Impact	Mitigation	Revised likely	Revised impact
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.		Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.		Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.		Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.		Choose an item.	Choose an item.

Woking Council is committed to equality in line with the Equality Act as well as recognising other inequalities relating to our county and council commitments. Please consider how the initiative will have a negative or positive impact on our community.

Community	Positive impact	Negative	Mitigation against the negative
Equality based on age			
Equality based disability			
Equality based gender			
Equality based pregnancy and maternity			
Equality based race and ethnicity			
Equality based sexual orientation			
Equality based marriage and civil partnerships			
Low income households			

7. Authorisation and Attachments

Authorities by the chairperson (or equivalent) of the board of trustees to agree to the submission of this business case for CAT.

Name of chairperson or equivalent:		
Role within the Community Organisation:		
Email contact:		
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have read Woking Borough Council's CAT policy and agree to the points within it	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I agree that the organisation I represent meets the community organisation criteria	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I agree to the draft lease agreement	

The following information is provided to support the business case.

<input type="checkbox"/>	The community organisation constitution (required)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Results on consultation (if relevant)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Programme of activity (if relevant)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Engagement plan (if relevant)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cashflow forecast (required)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Capital budget (if relevant)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Latest set of management accounts / or bank account details if a new organisation (required)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supporting letters
	Other information (please list):

Community Broker

Role: The post holder will play a pivotal role in delivering the council's policy on community asset transfers (CAT). This will involve being a broker between the council and community organisation to progress CAT to the requirements of both parties. Therefore, a key task will be to work with the community organisation at different steps and stages to ensure they are ready for the CAT and produce a quality business case for the council to consider.

Activity:

To consider assets (buildings and land) suitable for a community transfer and present as an option to the CAT board.

To respond to queries from the public and council members on an asset of interest for a CAT, and investigate if feasible in liaising with colleagues at the council to check the viability of an asset for CAT (including planning, property and finance).

Manage a mechanism for consulting services across the council on the current and future use of assets which have the potential as a CAT.

Meet with the community enterprise at different steps and stages to ensure they know the requirements of the policy and objectives of the council.

Provide advice and guidance on the community organisations' readiness as an organisation to take-on a CAT.

Provide the first response to a CAT proposal, giving advice to the community organisation on the requirements and interests of the council.

Review and make recommendations to the community organisation for improvements on their submission of expression of interest and business case.

Provide sign-posting to the community organisation of where they can access additional advice and support (though not legal signposting or advice which they need to source independently).

Manage / approve any expenditure allocated to the community group to cover their costs within the parameters of the CAT policy and agreed budget.

Work with the community enterprise and council to agree a timeline for the CAT submission and approval process, and liaise with parties to ensure the timeline is on track.

Address any tensions in the relationship between the council and the community organisation, looking at solutions that satisfy both parties.

Look to solve barriers and bottlenecks within the council that might hinder and delay the CAT, including co-ordinating and chairing internal meetings.

Be the secretariate for the CAT board, setting agendas and facilitating papers for the boards consideration; to also provide an update to the CAT board on the progress of CATs, and report outcomes of decisions to relevant community organisations.

Prepare formal governance reports with recommendations for considerations by senior officers and members.

Monitor the progress of the individual CATs after transfer and provide support if community enterprises face challenges.

Facilitate any change request the community organisations might require from the council, and aid the cessation of the CAT if that is the ultimate resolution.

Ensure council members are aware of the progress of CATs in their ward, and provide updates on CATs to senior officers and members forums.

Promote the CAT programme internally including awareness / training to officers and members, and externally through social media, media releases, and talks directly to community forums.

Experience	Essential	Desirable
In the last three years have led on community development work that facilitates support to not-for-profit organisations	x	
Providing advice and guidance to community organisations	x	
Involved in CAT projects as the broker between a community organisation and a local authority		x
Involved in the management or overseeing of property in a community setting	x	
Detailed knowledge of property management from a service view or role within the community		x
Understanding of business cases including budget and target setting	x	
Cross council working, liaising between different services in the council to broker solutions.		x
In the last year produce reports, action plans and minutes	x	
Skills		
Facilitations and negotiation skills to create consensus between parties	x	
Problem solving and finding creative ways to address a challenge	x	
Financial management including budget setting and monitoring		x
Project management, keeping schemes on time and to budget	x	
Knowledge of CAT and property issues		x
Able to communicate effectively and concisely to a range of audiences, including in reports and presentations	x	
Work well as a team member, as well as ability to work independently being responsive when making decisions	x	

EXECUTIVE – 1 FEBRUARY 2024

GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2024-25 AND PROPOSED SAVINGS

Executive Summary

This report brings forward the decisions required to maximise the savings that can be made by the Council in 2024/25, year one of its five-year Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Council had identified a potential £8.5m of savings in the September 2023 MTFS report. At that stage the savings were still broad proposals and further work has been undertaken through the autumn on the detailed options and deliverability of these proposals, linked to public consultation and equality impact assessments. This has resulted in a revised savings figure of broadly the same figure i.e. £8.4m, but this is now a more robust and deliverable plan.

Despite these savings, the Council still has a deficit on its business-as-usual services, even before the debt issue is taken into account. The deficit in 2024/25 is £12.4m, although most of this can be attributed to interest on debt and the deficit on the commercial estate: both issues are a legacy of historic investments. Further savings will have to be identified for the rest of the five-year MTFS period.

Significant work has also been undertaken with Government on how the Council can set a legal budget given the scale of its debt problem. Without that support the Council's budget deficit next year could be up to £785million. Much of this is a one-off, including restating the debt repayment provision (Minimum Revenue Provision) that should have previously been made. A summary of the point reached with this work is included in this report at Section 3, but the size and complexity of dealing with the debt means that the timescale to finalise the approach requires the Council to push back its final decisions on setting the budget and Council Tax to an Extraordinary meeting of Council on 4 March 2024. This report will include a five-year Medium Term Financial Strategy, including the ongoing costs of debt repayment.

The savings decisions are included in this report for approval and implementation, before the debt arrangement is confirmed, to ensure that full year savings can be delivered. This paper therefore includes updates on the processes for Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) and public consultation on proposed changes to Council services, which are part of the decision-making process on the savings recommended in this report.

Discussions with Government on the level of Council Tax increase have led to a proposal for a 10% increase, in line with that of other Council's in intervention that require Government support packages. Woking household Council Tax bills will only increase by 1% because of the 10% increase. This is because most of the tax income (around 90%) relates to services provided by Surrey County Council.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

- (i) the £8.4m of savings set out in Appendix 3b to the report be agreed;
- (ii) the Equality Impact Assessment and public consultation processes on the savings proposals that are summarised in Appendix 5 to the report, with detailed reports on each resident facing saving proposal, be noted as part of the decision-making process; and
- (iii) it be noted a further report to Full Council on 4 March 2024 will receive a final report from the Director of Finance to finalise the treatment of the Council’s debt and Council Tax in 2024/25.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: The contents of the report is to ensure open and transparent governance in the financial affairs of the Council in balancing the 2024/25 Budget.

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

Background Papers: [Public consultation report](#)
[Equality impact assessments \(EIAs\) supporting the Medium-Term Financial Strategy \(MTFS\)](#)

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Date Published: 24 January 2024

General Fund Budget 2024-25 and Proposed Savings

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report on the 2024/25 budget incorporates reviews and updates to the proposals previously reported in the September Medium Term Financial Strategy. The approach to the budget has been to deal separately, insofar as possible, with the historic debt issue and the Council's core (or business as usual) budget for services to residents.
- 1.2 This report focuses on the latter core service part of the process, with a further report to an Extraordinary meeting of Council on 4 March 2024 to finalise the debt position and set the level of Council Tax. That report will also include a five-year, medium-term view of the budget.
- 1.3 This report does however include a summary of the likely support package from Government on the Council's debt position for information, which is essential to allow the Council to set a legal budget in March. However, further work is needed on this before the meeting of Council in March, and therefore this report is not seeking for that approach at this stage.
- 1.4 The report then sets out:
 - the draft Vision within which the Council is working on its budget;
 - the approach taken to the budget, including the identification of savings options; and
 - the further detailed work undertaken on those savings options, in terms of financial analysis, public consultation and equality impact assessments.
- 1.5 The key purpose of the report is therefore to recommend the savings for approval by Full Council on 8 February 2024 so that implementation can commence, ensuring that full year savings can be delivered.

2.0 Government Intervention

- 2.1 On 25 May 2023, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) published the outcome of its non-statutory external assurance review into Woking Borough Council's (WBC) finances, investments and related governance. The Secretary of State considered the Council was failing to comply with its best value duty under the Local Government Act 1999. In particular, it highlighted the scale of financial and commercial risk due to the Council's legacy of disproportionate levels of debt at over £2billion. The government's intervention will be in place for five years.

3.0 The Council's Debt Position

- 3.1 On 7 June 2023, the then Section 151 Officer issued the Council with a Section 114 Notice. The notice was required because the Council's expenditure was likely to exceed the financial resources available, and therefore it could no longer balance its budget for the remainder of the financial year and subsequent years. The Council faces this extremely serious financial shortfall because of its historic investment strategy that has resulted in unaffordable borrowing, inadequate steps to repay that borrowing, and high values of irrecoverable loans. The notice stated that against available core funding of £16m in the 2023/24 financial year, WBC faced a deficit of £1.2bn, which includes two key elements: the cost of impaired loans (£614m) which is a balance sheet adjustment and the need to make backdated provision for the repayment of debt and write-off of some loans. The latter part of the s114 is now assessed as the £785m, as outlined later in this report.
- 3.2 Clearly, the size and scale of the historic debt prevents a legal budget being set for 2024/25 without some form of support from Government. Detailed discussions on a solution to this for 2024/25 have been ongoing via the Commissioners and s151 Officer. However, to access any support, the Council needs to show that it is 'living within its means' and taking steps to meet

General Fund Budget 2024-25 and Proposed Savings

a significant part of the deficit from its own resources. This includes both making savings on its service budgets and developing a disposal strategy for the Council's property portfolio, in a way that delivers the best returns for the public purse, allowing key services to be maintained and reducing the cost of debt servicing.

- 3.3 Work with Commissioners has focussed on separating, as far as possible, how the historic debt is dealt with from the challenge of setting a "business as usual" budget for the Council's services to its residents. This approach continues with this report, which sets out the recommended service savings of £8.4m for 2024/25 to Council on 8 February 2024. The report to the Extraordinary meeting of Council on 4 March 2024 will finalise the treatment of the debt in 2024/25 and the level of Council Tax.

Capital Financing costs including corrected Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

- 3.4 Given the significance of the costs of the debt, the Improvement and Recovery Plan work has included a detailed cashflow forecast and full reconciliation of the capital financing budget in accordance with proper accounting practice. As part of the budget setting process and in line with discussions with government the following have been addressed:

- The approach to Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) i.e. the proper provision for the repayment of debt not previously followed by the Council.
- The treatment of principal and interest repayments no longer fully recoverable from the companies following the suspension of the Revolving Credit Facility.
- An updated forecast for interest costs on borrowing, taking into account the additional borrowing agreed, the requirements to support the Capital Strategy and required refinancing during the year.

- 3.5 These issues also form part of the ongoing discussions with Government, because correctly accounting for the Council's debt would require a budget of around £170m to cover the interest and debt repayment (Minimum Revenue Provision or MRP) next year. Backdated debt repayment provision and the write off of loans would in total form a major part of the budget deficit of up to £785million next year. A legal budget could not be set with this level of costs. Hence, the Government will provide interim support to allow the Council to set a legal budget for next year.

- 3.6 This support involves two mechanisms. The first is to provide a Capitalisation Directive that allows costs in the budget to be capitalised and spread over several years, until funds from the debt reduction plan are available to meet them. This approach is the standard one at all Councils in intervention with financial difficulties. The Minister for Local Government wrote to the Leader and Chief Executive on 18 December 2023 asking for confirmation of the amount of capitalisation support required with a response date of week commencing 8 January 2024. The response is set out below.

- 3.7 The Minister's letter also recognised the unprecedented scale of the Council's challenge and the number of years it will take to resolve:

"You will also recognise that due to the scale and unprecedented nature of the Council's financial liabilities, Woking will need ongoing support from Government for several years to come. This will of course include support to set a balanced budget for 2024/25. Work overseen by Commissioners has confirmed that the Council cannot reasonably meet the cost of its Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) and that this is a contributing factor to the Council's ongoing deficit position"

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- 3.8 The Leader wrote back to the Minister on 12 January 2024 requesting a Capitalisation Directive of £331m. The detail of the approach will be set out in the report to Council on 4 March 2024 but the main elements of the budget to be capitalised are:
- the interest previously recharged to companies under the Revolving Credit Facilities that cannot now be covered (£44m in 2023/24 and £46m in 2024/25).
 - loans of £155m previously provided to the companies for revenue purposes that should have been charged to the revenue budget.
 - the interest costs of the business cases agreed with Government to finish the Victoria Square and Sheerwater schemes (£2m in 2023/24 and £5m in 2024/25).
 - cumulative reserves deficit including budget overspends in 2022/23 and 2023/24 (approx. £29m including the re-instatement of £10m ringfenced reserves).
 - a deficit in 2024/25 (assessed at the time the submission was made) after savings of £11.6m, plus backdated HRA recharge adjustments of up to £5m.
 - in order to create more resilience to risk, provision asset maintenance of £20m; for grant clawback and project risks of £7m and the re-creation of a General Fund reserve of £5m.
 - the capitalisation also ensures that earmarked reserves (e.g. HS2 monies for Brookwood Park and the PFI reserve are maintained).
- 3.9 The above figures will continue to be reviewed in the run up to 4 March Council, but the request, if approved will provide capitalisation of up to £331m. The 4 March report will include further analysis of the one off and ongoing debt costs.
- 3.10 In addition, as the Minister's letter noted, the Council cannot afford to make proper provision for debt repayment (MRP) due to the level of its debt compared to its budget. The additional provision required relates to the loans made to companies that the Council made through Revolving Credit Facilities and on which no debt repayment was provided for. The amount that would be required for next year's budget is an additional of £97m provision for debt repayment relating to 2024/25, in addition to the existing £8m provision. The need for a backdated MRP provision of £356m creates a total additional requirement of £454m that is not affordable.
- 3.11 It is worth noting that the level of MRP required in 2024/25, even without the backdated element, at £97m on top of the existing £8m, plus the interest cost on loans of approx. £70m, means that debt servicing costs for the Council should total over £170m next year. This sum is nearly ten times the size of Woking's net revenue budget in 2024/25 of £19m, which demonstrates the scale of the problem.
- 3.12 The Government recently finalised its approach to tightening up guidance on the provision of MRP – it originally consulted in 2021-22 on strengthening the duty to make provision for the repayment of debt. The final proposed amendments to statutory guidance were recently published with a deadline for response of 16 February 2024:
- <https://consult.leveellingup.gov.uk/local-government-finance/consultation-on-changes-to-statutory-guidance-and>
- 3.13 The guidance makes it clear that the Council's previous approach was not compliant with the duty to provide for MRP and seeks to prevent that approach in future. Despite this tightening of the rules, the Government has also provided for the guidance to be set aside in cases of serious financial failure intervention:

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“In very exceptional cases, where the government has made arrangements to intervene in a local authority and has, or is in the process of, put in place financial support arrangements for that authority, it may be appropriate to reflect the nature of any such financial support in the determination of a prudent amount. Where this is the case the local authority must seek agreement from the government on how any assumptions with respect to support are reflected in the determination of MRP.” (para 46 of the draft statutory guidance)”

- 3.14 The exceptional circumstances are intended to apply to Woking Borough Council. Backdated MRP amounts to £356m and will have to be charged to the 2023/24 (or prior year). This creates a deficit that would have to be carried forward to the 2024/25 budget. Added to this is MRP in 2024/25 of £97m, which would create a deficit of £454m if it were charged in full. The guidance will allow the Council not to charge this full amount, with Government permission. The debt repayments that would be carried forward to be dealt with by the longer-term debt reduction plan.
- 3.15 This exceptional support (£454m) and the capitalisation (£331m) would amount to a total budget deficit next year of up to £785m without that support. The approach taken by Government therefore allows the Council to set a legal budget for and continue to provide services in 2024/25. The report to Full Council will set this out in more detail along with financial and legal advice on the reliance to be placed on these mechanisms.

4.0 Debt Reduction Plan

- 4.1 On 7th December 2023 the Woking Commissioners provided the Secretary of State with their second report relating to the Council’s Improvement and Recovery Plan, which was passed by the Council on 30th November 2023.
- 4.2 A key part of the Improvement and Recovery Plan is the asset rationalisation and debt reduction work. The work is in the context of the strategic aim ‘to release the Council from unaffordable commitments whilst protecting the public purse and optimising the value of from existing assets.’ This is the longer-term work that the interim support from Government to set a legal budget (capitalisation and MRP) explained above, will facilitate.
- 4.3 The development of the Council’s overall commercial strategy is being led by the Strategic Director - Corporate Resources with the s151 Officer. They are supported by expert advisors who have provided advice to councils with similar financial and commercial challenges. The strategy will focus on bringing together all council commercial activities under one clear plan.
- 4.4 This objective is based on having:
- A full understanding of the activities of all council owned companies and joint ventures, and a plan for the council to exit these arrangements.
 - A full understanding of all council owned property interests, whether freehold ownership, leasehold or leased.
 - To have a clear plan for the rationalisation of property that matches the future needs of the council.
 - A review of procurement and contract management arrangements of suppliers, goods and services to ensure best value is maintained throughout the life of contracted out services which includes services provided by council owned companies.
- 4.5 The Woking Commissioners recognised progress in the asset rationalisation work and the plan over the next 4 months to produce a prioritised plan which will need to balance the need to reduce the levels of debt with achieving value for money from the assets sold. This will take the form of an asset disposal strategy covering the Council’s assets and those Council owned

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companies that have significant asset holding, primarily the ThamesWey Group and Victoria Square Woking Limited. The strategy is planned to cover a 3-to-5-year period.

- 4.6 Within the asset disposals strategy all assets are under review irrespective of which portfolio they sit within although it is accepted that there are considerations such as the continuing provision of services, social needs and contribution to revenue that will need to be considered for both Council services and the companies.
- 4.7 The next quarters performance management report will incorporate both progress on adopting an assets disposal strategy and a profile of capital receipts that this will be targeted to deliver.
- 4.8 Council Vision

Vision Statement:

A financially and environmentally sustainable Council, delivering services that residents value in every part of the borough.

Mission Statement:

A trusted and transparent Council that:

- *Lives within its means*
- *Is focused on services that make a difference to people in the Borough*
- *Works in partnership with the community to deliver positive outcomes*
- *Continually engages with residents to design more efficient and effective services*
- *Invests in talent to deliver for Woking's future*

- 4.9 The Woking for All Strategy, published in 2022, sets out a number of priorities for the Council. However, the context the Council is operating in has now changed, with the announcement of Government intervention in May 2023 and the issuing of a Section 114 Notice in June 2023. This clearly impacts what and how the Council is able to deliver. Therefore, the Council needs to set out how it will operate in the future and the priorities of the Woking for All Strategy need to be reviewed.
- 4.10 The development of a new Council vision is the start of this work. The vision will provide staff, residents, and partners with a clear understanding of the Council's direction of travel. The Council will then work to develop a 'golden thread', where the vision and updated Woking for All Strategy drive service planning and staff Performance Development Reviews. The Council will also develop tools to support the delivery of the vision by staff, for example, through a new Organisation Development Strategy.
- 4.11 A draft vision (the aspiration for the Council) and mission (how the Council will achieve the vision) have been developed to sit alongside the budget. The vision was developed through a series of workshops with the Executive, wider Members, Corporate Leadership Team, Commissioners, and staff.
- 4.12 The vision and mission, alongside the Council budget, will now help inform a review of the Council's objectives, set out in the Woking for All Strategy. This work will take place in Spring/Summer 2024, with a revised Woking for All Strategy coming to Council in early Autumn.

5.0 Benchmarking

- 5.1 As part of the budget setting process, it is important to understand how WBC's service offer compares to other councils. To aid this work, Local Partnerships were commissioned to carry out a benchmarking exercise between statistical nearest neighbours. The information includes

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comparative revenue outturn data, census, and planning data from national sources. Initial research has drawn some conclusions that support known issues. Specifically, in the majority of areas reviewed, the Council has historically spent more than its statistical neighbours. Also, in some service areas there has been increased spend even though the population and household figures have not increased significantly.

- 5.2 The data analysis is being led by officers working with the Executive Member for Finance and will be discussed with the Member Finance Working Group. As part of this, the Executive Member has agreed further work being commissioned to 'deep dive' into several statutory services – this will allow direct comparisons to be made with similar sized authorities and identify where opportunities for service improvements might exist. This will likely inform future decisions on service provision and savings opportunities in the further years of the MTFS.

6.0 General Fund 2024/25 Budget – Approach Taken

- 6.1 Earlier reports have highlighted the issues with data quality and the lack of accessible and meaningful financial information. As part of the Finance Recovery Plan a programme of work is underway and improvements have been made, including the improvement of the budget monitoring information and the information provided to Members on key savings, through the development of business cases and option analysis, for example on Pool in the Park. A considerable amount of work has been carried out since the last detailed report in September to review all savings, budget pressures and fees and charges, alongside the implementation of a new staffing structure and the Improvement and Recovery Plan work.
- 6.2 The September MTFS report identified £8.5m of potential budget savings. This target is a significant challenge, given that the Council's income from Council Tax and Business Rates (its "net budget") is projected to be only £19million next year. However, gross service spending is higher at £41m (excluding housing benefits and financing costs) due to some services being funded by fees and charges, which is why an increase in these charges for discretionary services, that might otherwise have to be cut, has been a key part of developing a more sustainable budget.
- 6.3 The September MTFS report indicated that even this level of savings was insufficient to meet the pressures on the Council's services (inflation, demand etc) which were estimated in September as £19million. The revised budget deficit is now estimated at £12.4m after £8.4m of savings i.e. total pressures were £20.8m
- 6.4 The additional costs over the target largely related to the Council's historic investments i.e. the large Commercial Estate and the cost of debt, not its day-to-day services. Given the size of the Council revenue budget, it will be difficult to find savings above the target £8.5m in one year. Therefore, the focus of financial planning for 2024/25 since September has been to:
- a) Delivering the maximum possible savings against service budgets from the £8.5m potential identified. This will demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting as much of the deficit as possible.
 - b) Review the options for savings from asset management and debt reduction options i.e. to target the historic arrangements that are the source of the pressures. This approach is part of the Commercial Strategy and asset rationalisation strategy being developed within the Council's Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP).
- 6.5 As the work has progressed from initial options to more detailed proposals, risks have been identified in the delivery and costing of the savings proposed in September, but this has led to more robust proposals, now totalling £8.4m. Options have also been reviewed in the light of public consultation.

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- 6.6 The review of savings options has included working with the Member Finance Working Group on key areas of concern for Members and the public in the budget, reviewing key savings proposals such as Pool in the Park and Community Centres in more depth and testing options, and feeding this work back into Overview and Scrutiny Committee and all Member briefings.
- 6.7 Work on a debt reduction plan linked to an asset rationalisation strategy has commenced and will develop proposals that provide a basis for Commissioners to discuss options with Government that deliver both a longer-term strategy and a short-term solution to setting a budget for next year. The debt issues are so complex and significant that they cannot be resolved in one year, so the interim solution to setting a legal budget explained above is needed for next year.

7.0 Service Savings Narrative

Savings Identification

- 7.1 The MTFS report in June 2023, alongside the s114 notice established a comprehensive “gateway” process across all services to identify potential savings.
- 7.2 The MTFS reports and the gateway savings process also identified costs and proposals over a 5-year MTFS period as well as for the 2024/25 budget. Year one will not be the only year in which the Council has to deliver savings to be able to contain its spending within the resources available. The programme of identified savings will need to be an ongoing exercise.
- 7.3 The savings targeted “business as usual” service budgets so that the Council can focus its available resources on core services. The significant debt legacy and large commercial estate need to be looked at alongside this as part of the Improvement and Recovery Plan work on a commercial strategy, asset rationalisation and a debt reduction plan.
- 7.4 Work through the autumn to now has focussed on ensuring that the identified savings are robust: that the options are viable, deliverable; have identified equality impact assessments and been through open and inclusive public consultation.
- 7.5 A significant proportion of the savings are in areas of discretionary spending where the Council has generally provided a wider range of services and to higher standards than similar councils. The Council’s approach to investment and its commercial estate led to an approach that gave a false sense of what was affordable for a small district Council. Benchmarking, undertaken by Local Partnerships with the support of the Local Government Association, is being used to ensure that the areas targeted for savings focus the Council on spending in line with comparable authorities.
- 7.6 Savings being proposed for 2024/25 are therefore the kind of savings other councils have already made e.g.
- Closing public toilets and seeking to enlist business or other partners in alternative provision.
 - Transferring sports pavilions and community centres to community ownership.
 - Increasing fees and charges for discretionary services in line with those made by other councils and to more fully recover costs.
 - Reductions to the cycle for street cleaning and ground maintenance services.
- 7.7 In other areas, the savings are on services that are not normally provided, or to the same extent, by other district councils, for example:

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- A wide range of community services, such as social prescribing and involved service provision that overlapped with or could be provided by the County or other partners.
- Significant spending on arts and cultural facilities.
- A business liaison team that overlaps with the County's economic role.

7.8 The savings also included significant increases (10 to 20%) in many fees and charges to improve cost recovery as a way of maintaining discretionary services, rather than ceasing them. The policy for setting fees and charges in future years will be built on the Commercial Strategy developed as part of the Improvement and Recovery Plan. It will also need to be based on a continued improvement in the financial information on the costs of services.

7.9 In addition, Members have been considering the likely level of Council Tax increase in the context of the Government intervention over its level of debt and the extent to which central government support and local contributions to re-balancing the Council's finances are needed.

Capacity to Deliver

7.10 The savings programme is a significant one: because:

- it involved a staff restructure programme and job reductions of up to 20% across all services (except finance and legal teams).
- at a potential £8.5m the savings represented a reduction of around half the total net spending of the Council of £15m in 2023/24 (£19m in 2024/25).
- delivering savings that are half the net budget is not something many councils would be able to deliver in one year, but the Council is also a small district Council with limited corporate capacity and a legacy of poor financial and management information. Whilst the Improvement and Recovery Plan devised with Commissioners has brought in new resources, the basic lack of capacity and good information continues to limit delivery capacity.
- whilst many of the savings being considered have been done elsewhere, other councils have had several years to implement some of the changes, particularly complex ones involving community asset transfers. the Council is having to deliver a large programme at a faster pace, increasing risks.

Delivering the Savings

7.11 Given the scale and risks of the savings programme, it is important that this risk is mitigated with robust assessment of savings delivery options and improved financial and management information.

7.12 During the autumn a business case format was developed firstly for the Pool in the Park proposal and then extended to other key savings such as Community Centres and the Lightbox to ensure a consistent and robust approach to savings delivery. The key elements of the business cases are:

- full costs, including life cycle maintenance, clarifying variable and fixed costs
- options analysis, based on benchmarking and user group consultation
- service usage and demand
- public consultation and equality impact assessment

- risk assessments

- 7.13 The business cases have ensured that a much more robust approach to savings delivery has been developed. For example, on Pool in the Park the original proposal for a phased closure had limited information on fixed costs and the costs of closure versus repair and maintenance. Benchmarking showed that charges for use of the facility were some of the lowest in Surrey and that information, combined with close work with user groups allowed an option of keeping the pool fully open with increased charges. Having developed this approach, the Council will be able to use the same approach to keep an ongoing review e.g. if demand drops off from increased fees or maintenance costs escalate, the Council will be able to consider an exit strategy based on sound information.
- 7.14 The business case approach also involved working with the Member Finance Working Group on the key areas of Member concern in the budget savings.
- 7.15 The Council will also be able to use the information to develop a robust process to monitor savings implementation. There will be a RAG rating on delivery that can be linked to both the improved monthly budget monitoring now in place and the new quarterly Performance Framework.

8.0 Updated Revenue Budget Position and Savings Target

- 8.1 Officers have worked on an update of estimates, reviewing both service costs and savings (e.g. Pool in the Park) and “corporate” items such as the provision made for inflation or wider commercial issues. This leads to an updated position summary revenue budget position (gross and net spending figures behind this are shown in Appendix 1) The deficit on the revenue accounts, after savings and pressures is £12.4million, which would normally be a draw on reserves. However, in the Council’s exceptional circumstances this deficit is covered by the Capitalisation Directive (along with the 2022/23 and 2023/24 deficits).
- 8.2 The 2023/24 MTFs was set with a deficit, using a planned one off £8.3m use of reserves that would need to be met by additional savings in 2024/25. Whilst the 2024/25 MTFs has identified further savings of £8.4m, further pressures and budget reconciliations mean that the deficit on the revenue accounts has significantly increased and even allowing for the further savings the deficit has increased by a further £4m from £8.3m to £12.4m.
- 8.3 What this means is that WBC is still spending above its resources, despite the significant level of savings in the budget for next year. The increase in the deficit is analysed below and links to the chart shown in Appendix 2. Much of the issue remains firstly, increased interest costs of circa £5m on the debt and secondly, the cost of the Commercial Estate and increased costs of maintaining the commercial estate and income generated from the estate when compared to the budgeted assumptions. The latter is a mixture of over optimistic budgeting and challenging economic climate that retail and office estates are operating in with increased voids and reduced yields from commercial lease agreements.
- 8.4 The summary revenue for the Council is shown below. It shows the business-as-usual costs for the Council, ignoring the debt adjustments detailed earlier in the report. The report to 4 March Council will have further analysis showing the debt adjustments and their impact on the Council’s revenue account.

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TABLE ONE: SUMMARY REVENUE ACCOUNT	2023/24	2024/25
	£million	£million
Communities	9.7	6.7
Place	7.4	7.1
Resources/Corporate	-12.2	-5.6
Total Service Directorates	4.9	8.2
Lease Surrender	0	-1.9
Pay Provision	0	0.1
Hardship Scheme	0	0.1
HRA recharge adjustment	0	0.3
PFI scheme charge	0.2	0.2
Other	0.6	0
Net cost of Services	5.7	7.0
Minimum Revenue Provision	7.5	8.1
Interest Payable	54.5	64.0
Interest Receivable*	-43.3	-47.7
Net Financing Costs	18.8	24.4
Amount to be met from Taxation, Grant and Reserves	24.5	31.4
Business Rates	-2.2	-4.4
Business Rates Pool	-1.1	-0.3
Collection Fund Surplus (-)/Deficit	-0.2	-0.5
Revenue Support Grant/New Homes Bonus/Other Grants	-1.4	-1.6
Total External Finance	-4.9	-6.8
Council Tax Income	-11.2	-12.2
DEFICIT	8.3	12.4

* Note that most of the interest receivable (£46m of the £47m) is due from ThamesWey and Victoria Square companies and the interest is currently suspended. The cost of this suspension is included in the Capitalisation Directive.

8.5 The above table shows the net spend in each Directorate and net revenue expenditure. Net expenditure for Councils is usually defined as spending financed by Grants and Council Tax i.e. £19m in 2024/25, but there is a £12m deficit, making a total of £31m. Gross spending and income is shown at an overall Council level in Appendix 1 and by service in Appendix 4.

8.6 The key changes to the September position are explained below, broken down into:

- a) changes to the service savings following detailed work on options and costs and public consultation (shown in Appendix 3);
- b) changes to cost pressures e.g. inflation or demand for services (Table 2 below and Appendix 2); and
- c) additional measures and review of corporate items (outlined below).

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- 8.7 The Service savings reported in September have been updated and summarised in the attached Appendix 3. Appendix 3a shows the changes from September and Appendix 3b shows a short narrative for each saving. The revised total of savings recommended for approval is £8.4million. The further work since September means that this total is much more robust and capable of delivering the estimated level of savings.

Base Budget – Staff Savings

- 8.8 Work to map and implement an organisational restructure is being implemented following an extensive review of Council services and delivery models. The restructure reflects the Council's objective of moving towards a smaller organisation which is focused on delivering core services. This approach was intended to deliver significant budget savings (target £2.4m) on staffing budget in 2024/25. There has been both an extensive public consultation exercise and an internal staff consultation process on the impacts of these savings.
- 8.9 The final position is that the restructure will deliver over £3m of savings, of which £2.2m can be taken as a saving compared to the 2023/24 base budget and £0.8m is cost avoidance. No provision has been made for a staff pay award in 2024/25, except for the maintenance of the Real Living Wage at the bottom of the pay scales at £82k.
- 8.10 The maximum cost of redundancies is £1.1m, but this will be mitigated down because in the restructure process vacancies were held. The final costs are covered by a capital receipt that DLUHC could be used to cover revenue transformation costs. The costs are half of the annual saving, which is a good payback period (up to 2 years is a normal benchmark).

Base Budget – Service Savings

- 8.11 The remainder of the proposals were non-staffing savings, the impact of which on services to residents is also significant. To assist Members with the information required to make the difficult decisions, there have been fortnightly meetings of the Finance Working Group (FWG), which includes Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting with senior officers.
- 8.12 Options appraisals have been undertaken for review by officers for review by FWG on the key proposed changes to discretionary services that might deliver significant savings but have the potential to have a high impact on residents and stakeholders. The initial savings proposals have been reviewed and updated in line with the more detailed budget verification work. This included whether alternative options for delivering the savings were possible and needed, taking into account financial performance and usage of facilities, identified opportunities and constraints, emerging information from the budget consultation process, the Equality Impact Assessments and benchmarking data.
- 8.13 **Leisure Services (Pool in the Park):** The proposal to review this facility was the most commented on issue in the public consultation exercise. Based on this and discussions with user groups there is a clear preference for the Council to explore increasing fees and charges, including concessionary rates, as an alternative to closure.
- 8.14 Other than price increases (the impact of which would need to be monitored) this option will not have a significant impact in relation to the EQIA as specialist groups, sports clubs, local schools, and over one hundred staff would not be displaced or made redundant.
- 8.15 Council officers worked with Members on a detailed options analysis for Pool in the Park, that compares the full and partial closure options to a model that includes a significant change in charges to move towards nil subsidy and make the budget saving for next year this way whilst longer-term options are kept under review. There has been an extensive exercise to investigate the costs and issues that would arise if there were a full or phased closure, including lifecycle maintenance versus costs of closure. Benchmarking has shown that the Council's current

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charges are low in comparison to neighbouring councils and work with user groups demonstrated that fee increases were preferred to closure.

- 8.16 The options analysis has shown that the most viable option over both 5 years and for the 2024/25 budget is to increase charges to keep it open. The revised saving in 2024/25 is £445k on running costs and £388k on the energy service charge. Clearly if the income drops because of this, the Council will have to consider closure at a later date, but this would also allow time for an exit strategy to be considered including possible community ownership. Investment will be made in life cycle costs (the Capital Programme report to 1 February Executive includes essential maintenance costs) and there will be more certainty of income streams after the increase in charges, so there should be a much stronger basis of assessing viable options.
- 8.17 Work will continue with user groups on possible community ownership as well as Woking BC considering the other options for the facility. The decision put forward in this report therefore provides a basis for keeping the facility open in 2024/25 and time and a firmer foundation for considering the longer-term future of the facility.
- 8.18 **Community Centres:** Work has been undertaken to develop an Options Appraisal for each of the Council owned Community Centres – St Mary’s, The Vyne, and Parkview. Note that Moorcroft is out of scope as this centre is already cost neutral. The preferred option for each centre is to retain ownership but transfer the asset to a third party (community group, charity, or other organisation) on a long-lease basis. Any transfer would include all associated capital replacement costs, thereby removing all Council subsidy. This approach will have the dual benefit of ensuring the Centres remain in the heart of the community, whilst moving to an operating model is self-financing and sustainable in the long-term. Community Asset Transfers can take time to implement but discussions with a number of potential providers are progressing and transfers are expected to complete in 2024/25.
- 8.19 **The Lightbox:** Officers have been working closely with the Lightbox to explore options that enable the Lightbox to move to a community-based business model that does not rely on Council funding. External funding has been secured for 2024/25 which will enable the Lightbox to review its operating model with the objective of moving towards a self-funding arrangement from 2025/26 onwards.
- 8.20 **Pavilions:** Following a successful public consultation, several community groups and organisations have highlighted interest in taking control of the pavilions (and associated running/capital costs) as part of an asset transfer scheme. A Community Asset Transfer Policy has been developed and work to implement the process is underway. Asset transfers are complex and can take time, however external funding has been secured for 2024/25 which will offset the majority of Council subsidy.
- 8.21 **Public Toilets:** The closure of public toilets (excluding toilet provision within Victoria Place including Wolsey Place shopping centre) has been identified as a potential saving given that this is a discretionary service the Council is not legally obligated to provide. The implications of closing the public WC facilities have been explored, and a robust public consultation exercise and an Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken. Work is underway to explore mitigation measures that can be put in place if public toilets are closed; potential alternative facilities within reasonable proximity of all WCs proposed for closure have been identified (although no consultations with business / other service providers of these facilities has yet taken place). A key focus is around developing mitigation measures for the facilities with the highest percentages of total use (as per public consultation) which are confirmed as Woking Park and Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground.
- 8.22 **Neighbourhood Services (cleansing contract):** Serco have supported the Council by developing a cost reduction proposal for the remaining year of the contract. This proposal reduces the current service standards to statutory levels and will be considered by Council. If approved, Officers will work with Serco to implement the changes. The current contract runs

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until March 2025, and work to re-tender the contract to a new specification is underway, based on achieving statutory service standards.

- 8.23 The Council has made significant in-year savings from the current Serco Grounds Maintenance Contract. The curtailing of certain functions and service levels will result in reductions in street cleaning and grounds maintenance; however, the revised offer will bring the contract more in line with other comparable District and Boroughs. The current contract runs until March 2025, and work to re-tender the contract to a new specification is underway.
- 8.24 **Community Grants:** As part of the removal of Community Grants, Officers have been working with community organisations, supporting them to find alternative funding streams and transition away from WBC funding. Positive discussions have been held with Citizens Advice Woking (CAW), and external funding has been identified to support the service in 2024/25 which will allow CAW to transform their business operations to a more sustainable model moving forward. In addition, a new, fixed term 'debt coordinator' post will be established in the Council, which will be externally funded, and will work with CAW and other voluntary groups to help develop capacity.
- 8.25 **Community Transport:** discussions are continuing with Woking Community Transport on options for next year after their grant has ended.
- 8.26 **Business Liaison:** The removal of the Business Liaison function from the Council will be mitigated through closer working with Surrey County Council (SCC) which is a key driver of economic development across Surrey. The recent County Deal has given SCC additional functions and funding to support local businesses, and has recently developed a new careers skills hub, covering the whole of the county. Officers are working closely with colleagues at County to enable a smooth transition. The Council has also allocated £50K funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund to support economic growth across Woking to bring together businesses to work collaboratively as a "Place Board". This funding would facilitate that collaboration, driving a programme of work that supports growth, attracts new business, promotes our strong cultural offer and seeks to retain business as well as talent and skills.
- 8.27 **Car parking:** is subject to a strategic review of the significant level of and demand for space. This budget report does not therefore include proposals for car park fees, which will be the subject of a separate future report.

Base Budget – Changes in Cost Pressures

- 8.28 The draft budget in the September report included the following that have reviewed and updated:
- an allowance for pay and price inflation
 - Council Tax, business rates and New Homes Bonus income
 - budget pressures including car parking income, commercial rents and capital financing costs
- 8.29 Inflation and pressure assumptions have been scrutinised and a summary of the key changes on the budget are shown in the chart in Appendix 2 and summarised below.

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TABLE TWO: Summary of Budget Movements

Item	£m
2023/24 Budget DEFICIT per TABLE ONE 1	8.3
Staff savings	-2.3
Other savings (£8.4m in total including staffing)	-6.1
Inflation (£2m):	
• Business rates	0.8
• Energy	0.5
• Waste contract	0.2
• Other	0.5
Budget pressures (£8.9m):	
• Commercial estate	5.3
• Procurement savings not achieved	0.5
• Bed and breakfast/homeless costs	0.5
• Womens Support Centre budget Adjustment	0.3
• Local Plan budget	0.5
• Other	1.8
Other (net £4.4m):	
Increase in MRP (base budget: amount properly provided for)	0.6
Increased interest payable	9.4
Increased interest receivable	-4.4
Fees and charges – price increase	-1.4
Fees and charges – volume change	1.0
	4.4
External Finance (Business Rates/Grants)	-1.8
Council Tax	-1.0
Deficit (Use of Reserves) PER TABLE ONE	12.4

8.30 No provision has been made for a staff pay award in 2024/25, except £82k for the maintenance of the Real Living Wage at the bottom of the pay scales.

8.31 A review of recharges to the Housing Revenue Account has been undertaken back to 2019/20 (the last year of accounts that are not yet fully audited). This was not included in the September MTFS report but has now been built into the budget for next year at an additional cost of £344k to the General Fund. The overall adjustment of £2.1m will be built into the relevant years (and are covered by the capitalisation):

Year	£'000
2019/20	292
2020/21	283
2021/22	286
2022/23	518
2023/24	380
2024/25	344
TOTAL	2,102

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- 8.32 A potential cost pressure of £1.4m arising from the arrangements for the Victoria Square car parks ownership has been reviewed as part of the wider work on Victoria Square assets and debt. This cost is being picked up as part of the overall asset process for VS and does not now have to be included in the 2024/25 budget. Work is being undertaken on the management agreement under which the Council will operate the car park and the aim will be to contain this cost within existing budgets along with any changes to car park tariffs in year.
- 8.33 The September report included a £1.9m saving from a potential lease surrender by the tenant of one of the Council's office buildings (Victoria Gate). This surrender has now been agreed and the tenant is moving to another Council owned office. In addition, the sale of the property to Surrey County Council has been agreed at Executive on 18 January 2024, making a significant start on the asset rationalisation and debt reduction process of the Commercial Estate.

Government Grant Settlement, Council Tax and Business Rate Income

- 8.34 The table below sets out Woking Borough Council's 2024/25 provisional settlement in comparison to 2023/24 final settlement:

	2023/24 Settlement - Final	2024/25 Settlement - Provisional	Variance	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Core Spending Power	15.200	16.000	0.800	5.26
Grants				
- Revenue Support Grant	0.093	0.099	0.006	6.45
- New Homes Bonus Grant	1.221	0.025	(1.196)	(97.95)
- Services Grant	0.086	0.014	(0.072)	83.72
- Minimum Funding Guarantee Grant	0	1.466	1.466	100.00
Total Grants	1.400	1.604	0.204	14.57

- 8.35 The Core Spending Power ("CSP") is government's measure of resources available to Woking Council to fund general fund revenue service delivery. It sets out the money that has been made available through the local government finance settlement. The CSP does not reflect the total actual resources the Council receive as the CSP includes government's estimates [i.e. notional amounts] for Council Tax, and business rates, but it does include actual settlement grants [i.e. revenue support grant, new homes bonus, service grants and minimum funding guarantee].
- 8.36 In effect the CSP is a mechanism for Government to ensure local authorities receive at least 3% increase compared to the previous year's CSP. The mechanism for ensuring the 3% threshold is met is through the minimum funding guarantee grant. In the Council's case for 2024/25 a minimum funding guarantee grant of £1.466 million is to be paid.
- 8.37 Budget figures for council tax and business rates have been updated in line with a review of the collection performance and delegated decisions on declaring the Collection Fund surplus and setting the council tax base in time for Council Tax setting at Full Council on 4 March.

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However, further work is needed to verify some details before the final council tax setting on 4 March.

9.0 Summary of Service Budgets

9.1 Appendix 4a to 4c to this report includes gross and net control totals for each area of service that take into account all budget changes including changes in fees and charges, to the staffing structure and the savings to be delivered. Prior year (2023/24) figures are shown for comparison. This is important for a transparent budget setting process and to support effective budget management during the year. This information has been lacking in previous years.

9.2 [this Appendix is subject to further work and will follow]

10.0 Prior Year Costs and Impact on Budget Setting

10.1 Additional challenges arise from the overspends in current year budget 2023/24 of £3.3m as at Quarter 3 (plus £8m of reserves used to set the budget) and also the previous year's 2022/23 outturn £9m above budget, as reported to November Executive.

10.2 Normally prior year overspends have to be added to the following year's budget if they cannot be covered by reserves. However, due to the lack of reserves these deficits have been added to the Capitalisation Directive, along with the £12.4m deficit on the 2024/25 budget.

10.3 A full analysis of the level of Reserves will be included in the 4 March report, once the Capitalisation Directive has been confirmed.

11.0 Reserves and Section 25 Report

11.1 In making decisions in relation to the revenue budget and council tax the Council has various legal and fiduciary duties. The Council is required by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to make specific estimates of gross revenue expenditure and anticipated income leading to the calculation of the council tax requirement and the setting of the overall budget and council tax. The amount of the council tax requirement must be sufficient to meet the Council's legal and financial commitments, ensure the proper discharge of its statutory duties and lead to a balanced budget.

11.2 In exercising its fiduciary duty, the Council should be satisfied that the proposals put forward are a prudent use of the Authority's resources in both the short and long term; that the proposals strike a fair balance between the interests of Council taxpayers and ratepayers, current and future, on the one hand and the community's interests in adequate and efficient services on the other; and that they are acting in good faith for the benefit of the community whilst complying with all statutory duties. Officers have addressed the duty to strike a fair balance between the different elements of the community and the interests of council tax and business rate payers in developing the proposals which are set out in the Directorate reports.

11.3 Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires that when a local authority is making its budget calculations, the Chief Finance Officer ('CFO') of the authority must report to the Council on:

- the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations;
- the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves; and
- the Council has a statutory duty to have regard to the CFO's report when making decisions about the calculations.

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- 11.4 As part of the MTFs report to 4 March 2024 Council a full Section 25 Statement will be provided by the s151 Officer and agreed with Commissioners. As required by statute this will set out in full the risks to the budget position, following the format of the new CIPFA guidance and drafted in a way that is relevant to the circumstances the Council are in. It remains of vital importance that the Council plays its part in the delivery of the required budget savings set out in this report, whilst the government support addresses the significant issues arising from the historic debt and commercial activities.
- 11.5 A key part of the s25 judgment will therefore be the reliance to be placed on the support offered by Government in setting a legal budget i.e. the capitalisation directive and the approach taken to Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The measures being used by Government to support the Council's budget are explained earlier in this report. The scale and complexity of them requires significant additional work by the s151 officer and Finance Commissioner with Government leading up to the final budget setting Council on 4 March. The report to that meeting will include a detailed analysis and advice on finalising the budget and council tax.
- 11.6 In previous years the Council has sometimes used significant contributions from Reserves to support service delivery. Recent work has clarified that reserves were used up in 2022/23, prior to the s114 notice. However, the Capitalisation Directive request submitted to Government on 12 January made a case to reinstate key reserves:
- a General Fund Balance of £5m
 - Earmarked Reserves of £10m
 - A risk reserve for grant clawback and abortive project costs of £7m
- 11.7 These reserves would provide a basis for managing financial risks during the year and thereby improving financial stability. Further detail on the reserves position will be included in the 4 March report once the capitalisation has been confirmed with Government.

12.0 Council Tax

- 12.1 The Council Tax referendum limit will remain unchanged from 2023/24 and is 3% for local authorities without social care responsibilities. This will generate £330k which had already been built into the base budget position. For upper tier authorities there is a further 2% precept for social care. Council tax increases above that level are normally subject to public consultation process but are also usually part of the Government's position via an intervention. In other Councils subject to intervention, tax increases above the cap have been implemented as part of dealing with budget gaps. Thurrock and Slough Councils increased their tax by 10% and Croydon increased theirs by 15%.
- 12.2 The Minister for Local Government's letter of 18 December made it clear that the severity of the Council's financial position makes a Council Tax increase of 10% "appropriate and proportionate" The Government has therefore made bespoke provision for the Council to be exempted from the normal referendum limit of 3%. In the context of the Government's support for the legacy debt problem, the final recommendation to Council on 4 March on the level of the tax will have to take cognisance of this view from the Minister.
- 12.3 Finance Working Group had previously discussed a potential inflationary increase but the recent downward trend in the CPI Index meant that this would not meet Government expectations. The Leader met the Minister on 11 January to discuss Council Tax and put forward a case for an 8% increase that would benchmark with other Surrey districts. However, it was clear from the meeting the Government's view is that a 10% increase is "appropriate and proportionate". Therefore, in the Leader's response to the Minister's letter on 12 January to request capitalisation support of £331million, the Leader accepted that a recommendation

General Fund Budget 2024-25 and Proposed Savings

of a 10% Council Tax would be made, raising a further 770k, raising £1.1m of income to support services in total.

- 12.4 The Minister also asked the Council to consider mitigation measures for any hardship created by the tax increase and a proposal is being developed. However, because the majority of every household's Council Tax bill goes to Surrey County Council, an increase of 10% for Woking BC will only increase bills by 1%. The mitigation proposal, costing up to £100k will therefore consider wider hardship issues and links with debt advice partners in the Borough. A full proposal and Equality Impact Assessment will be proposed as part of the 4 March report.

13.0 Capital Programme and Treasury Management Strategy

- 13.1 A separate report is being drafted for approval at the 8 February Council on the Capital Programme, which will be a curtailed programme from previous years given the debt position. The Council has previously funded a number of capital investment programmes (such as Sheerwater and Victoria Square) through the setting up of group companies, financed through loans provided by the Council - drawn from the Public Works Loan Board. This practice has now been deemed both unsustainable and not compliant with financial regulations and a new Company Governance process has been put in place as agreed by Executive on 16 November 2023.

- 13.2 For next year and in future, the Council's capital programme will be developed in line with the principles set out in the July 2023 report and reported as part of the budget process. The following *Capital Planning Principles* were adopted by Council in July 2023 to form the Capital Programme which will be presented to Council in February. Proposals that do not fall within these 'Capital Principles' will not be included within the Draft Capital Programme.

- Items of programming that relate to essential health and safety works and deliver compliance to the regulations within in the Council's property estate.
- Essential investment in Information & Communications Technology to ensure that the Council has fit for purpose and secure tools and infrastructure to support operations generally where there is a suitable business case to support such investment.
- Items where - following support from Government and from Commissioners - specific resources are provided to the Council by Government to complete or partially complete certain specified schemes that were already in delivery by the various companies owned by the Council when the Section 114 Notice was issued. (this is the basis of the business cases reported elsewhere on this agenda)
- Any schemes that can be shown to be wholly funded from external resources without implying additional cost burdens for the Council.
- Where proposals are estimated to return a measurable revenue saving; for example, leasing of the Council's commercial property portfolio which may require modest upfront capital investment and which then return a beneficial income stream to the revenue budget.
- In addition, the programme will include schemes which can be sustainably funded via the Housing Revenue Account

- 13.3 The Treasury Management Strategy to be included in the 4 March report will set out the Council's borrowing requirements and strategy, the annual investment strategy, the Treasury and Prudential Indicators and the Council's revised Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy. The report will follow the CIPFA requirements and be closely aligned to the discussions with government on the nature of the support package likely to be available.

14.0 Public and Staff Consultation

- 14.1 A six-week public consultation on the proposed service reduction ran from October to November which gave residents and community stakeholders the opportunity to have their say on the proposed changes to services. In total, 5,792 responses were received.
- 14.2 The consultation included three proposals: the closure of public toilets; transferring the management and maintenance of sports pavilions (excluding pitches) to alternative organisations; and the phased closure of Pool in the Park. Residents also had the chance to comment on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 14.3 A stakeholder consultation concentrated on learning what impact the proposed removal of funding would have on affected organisations and their users. It also posed the question of if any group was willing and able to take on the full running costs for a service.
- 14.4 The consultation was publicised through media releases and corporate e-newsletters. In addition, 206 organisations or affected groups were directly contacted. Day care users were interviewed directly.
- 14.5 The full consultation report can be found on the website [Service Reduction Consultation Results | Woking Community Forum](#). Key headlines from the consultation include:-
- Pool in the Park consultation: Residents preferred the option of increasing prices rather than closure of Pool complex (57%).
 - Pavilion consultation: Goldworth Park Pavilion, Woking Park Pavilion, Brookwood Country Park and West Byfleet pavilions were the most frequently used pavilions.
 - A number of community groups (12) expressed interest in the management of pavilions (based on a Community Asset Transfer Scheme) subject to conditioning surveys of the pavilions.
 - Closure of public toilets consultation: 33% of respondents don't use public toilets.
 - Respondents indicated that closure would impact vulnerable groups as well as those who participate in activities.
 - MTFS consultation: 63% of respondents had concerns about The Lightbox closing due to potential loss of funding from the Council.
- 14.6 The consultation results and analysis have been fed into the Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) for each proposed change and informed possible mitigations. The analysis has also been incorporated into the business cases and in some cases the proposal has changed. The Council is engaging groups who have come forward for potential transferring of an asset.
- 14.7 As a result of the proposed changes to the service offer, consultation with affected staff and UNISON was launched in November 2023. The consultation closed in January 2024 and during this time staff had the opportunity to comment on, question and suggest alternatives to the proposed structure, Job Descriptions and the selection and assessment process.
- 14.8 Staff are supported through training opportunities, one to ones, and regular briefings, alongside Trade Union support for those who are members. The staffing structures have been designed to align to the proposed service changes; therefore, no final decision will be made until the budget has been approved in February.

15.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 15.1 A robust MTFs is a key document in the Council's financial planning cycle. This document sets out the strategic approach that the Council needs to take to deliver the Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP) and respond to the Section 114 Notice, whilst continuing to meet its statutory duties. The MTFs is designed to acknowledge and structure approaches that mitigate financial risk.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 15.2 In considering the budget, the Council must also consider its ongoing duties under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity between all irrespective of whether they fall into a protected category such as race, sex, religion, etc. Having due regard to these duties does not mean that the Council has an absolute obligation to eliminate discrimination but that it must consider how its decisions will contribute towards meeting the duties in the light of all other relevant circumstances such as economic and practical considerations.
- 15.3 The Council has sought to understand the equalities impacts of proposed service changes and any potential mitigations which can be offered. Given the scale and complexity of the proposed change required to balance its budget, the Council's efficiency proposals for 2024/25 have been analysed to understand positive and negative impacts on both residents and staff with protected characteristics, particularly where they may be impacted by multiple efficiency proposals.
- 15.4 The EqlAs have been developed with the support of an organisation called Local Partnerships, as part of our sector support offer from the Local Government Association. Local Partnerships have provided external steer and challenge to ensure these important documents are as robust as possible. In total 17 EqlAs have been produced with a cover report which will consider the cumulative impact of the changes on people with protected characteristics and analyse the potential impacts in totality. As part of the EqlA process, the Council also takes impacts on non-statutory issues (such as socio-economic status) into consideration, to ensure we take a more comprehensive approach to equality.
- 15.5 In early January 2024, the Council held an EqlA review meeting where a small panel of Members reviewed the draft EqlAs and fed into their development. A cover report is included in Appendix 5 and the detailed equality impact assessments are published on the [Council's website](#). The information within the detailed EqlA report for each resident facing saving proposal is intended to ensure that Members can pay due regard to the equality implications of the proposed budget for 2024/25.

Legal

- 15.6 The Council is still obliged to meet its statutory duties and continue to make decisions in accordance with public law principles. The setting of a balanced budget in March 2024 is a legal requirement.

REPORT ENDS

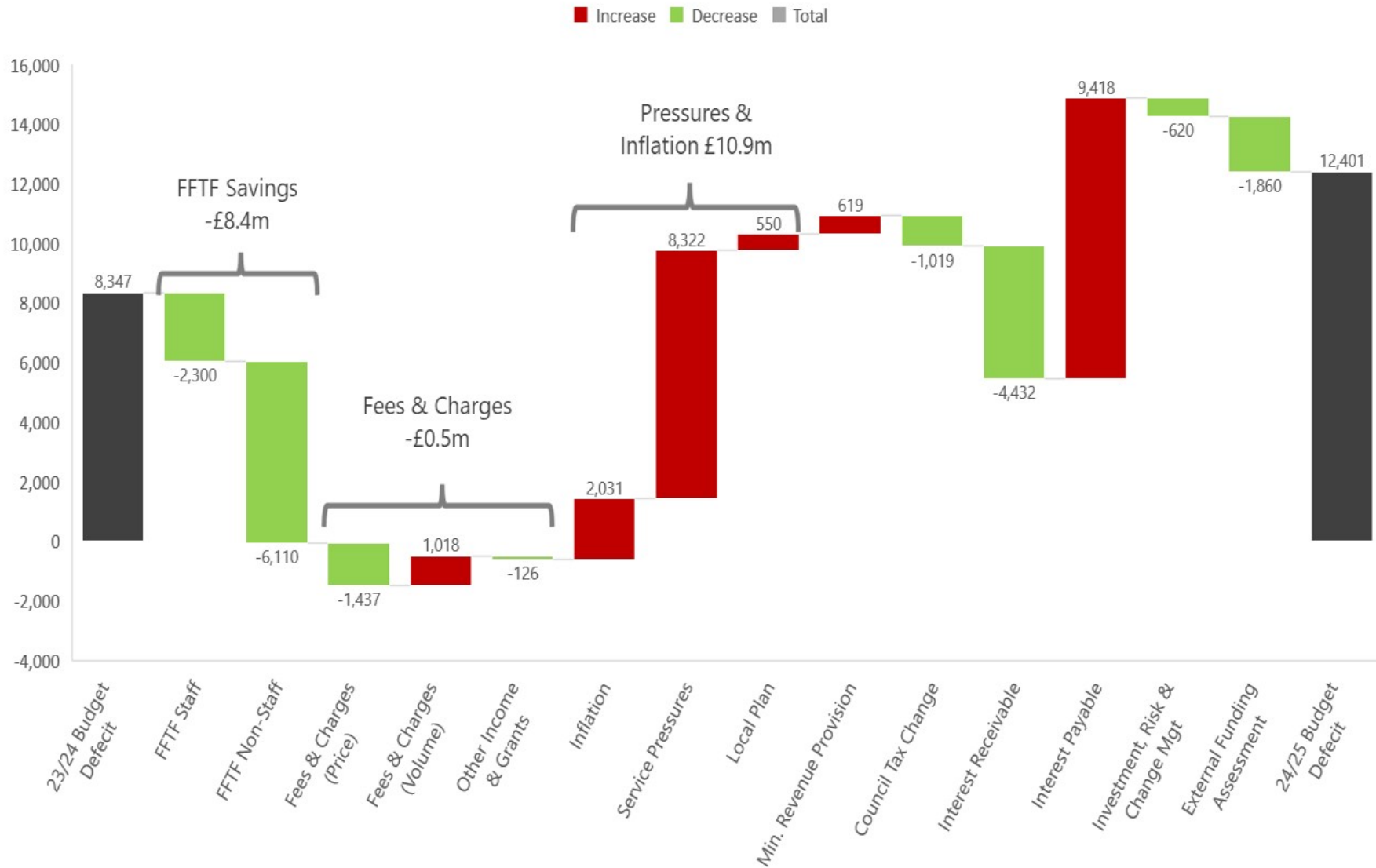
2024/25 Budget 'v' 2023/24 Budget - Gross Expenditure and Gross Income

	2023/24 Budget	2024/25 Budget	Budget Change
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Gross Expenditure			
Employee Costs	20.914	18.614	(2.300)
Benefits payments	20.743	20.945	0.202
Other Non-Employee Costs	21.505	22.069	0.564
Gross Service Spend*	63.162	61.627	(1.535)
Management of Change	0.250	0.000	(0.250)
Risk Contingency	0.250	0.000	(0.250)
Pay Provision	0.000	0.082	0.082
Mid-point Vacancies	0.000	(0.100)	(0.100)
HRA Recharge Adjustment	0.000	0.344	0.344
PFI Unitary Charge Equalisation	0.175	0.175	0.000
Investment Programme items funded from revenue	0.120	0.000	(0.120)
Minimum Revenue Provision	7.503	8.122	0.619
Interest payable	54.533	62.977	8.444
Total Gross Expenditure	125.993	133.227	7.234
Gross Income			
Fees and Charges	(12.092)	(12.337)	(0.245)
Commercial Rents	(19.977)	(15.482)	4.495
Service Specific Grants	(21.125)	(21.182)	(0.057)
Other Income	(5.043)	(5.108)	(0.065)
Interest and investment income	(43.281)	(47.713)	(4.432)
Business Rates	(2.215)	(4.377)	(2.162)
Business Rates Surrey Pool	(1.065)	(0.300)	0.765
Business Rates (Surplus)/Deficit	0.000	(0.258)	(0.258)
Council Tax	(11.212)	(12.230)	(1.018)
Council Tax (Surplus)/Deficit	(0.236)	(0.236)	0.000
Revenue Support Grant	(0.093)	(0.099)	(0.006)
New Homes Bonus Grant	(1.221)	(0.025)	1.196
Services Grant	(0.086)	(0.014)	0.072
Minimum Funding Guarantee Grant	0.000	(1.466)	(1.466)
Total Gross Income	(117.646)	(120.826)	(3.180)
(Surplus)/Deficit	8.347	12.401	4.054

* Note gross spend excluding housing benefits payments funded 100% by Government grant is £41m in 2024/25

Appendix 2: 2024/25 Budget 'v' 2023/24 Budget – Summary of Changes
Budget Movements (£k)
 23/24 to 24/25

Appendix 2



**SUMMARY OF 2024/25 SAVINGS -
VARIANCE TO SEPT MTFS**

APPENDIX 3a

	Sept	Current	Variance	Explanation of variance
3A MTFS FTF Savings	£'000	£000	£000	
STAFF & RUNNING COSTS				
	2,948,000			
Staff	2,404,000	2,200,000	- 204,000	Council wide staffing structure has broadly delivered the expected saving against 2023/24 base budget. Total saving is £3m - of which £800k is cost avoidance
Vacancies	0	100,000	100,000	Likely savings from not appointing vacant post at the top of potential grade
Running Costs:				
COMMUNITIES			-	
Community Centres	92,000	75,934	- 16,066	Budgets removed/reduced to just leave essential running costs.
Family Service	31,000	11,090	- 19,910	All Budgets Removed - TUPE 31.03.24
Sports, Arts & Culture (excludes Leisure Centres and Pool in the Park)	251,000	207,000	- 44,000	This saving represents the withdrawal from funding of The Lightbox and voluntary contributions to Woking Arts and Sports Councils. The September figure was based on an estimate. This figure has now been verified.
PLACE				
Gateway savings from Green Infrastructure	24,000	54,376	30,376	Additional saving identified from cease of external partnership for Basingstoke Canal.
Business Liaison	146,000	132,550	- 13,450	Service has been removed based on actual costs.
Property (covered elsewhere, now FTF 3B)	650,000	0	- 650,000	Now included in phase 3 B below
Removal of Grants to External Bodies	686,000	691,243	5,243	
NNDR Discretionary Discounts	30,000	30,000	-	
Savings in Debt Management Expenses	250,000	0		Saving not achievable in year one: now part of wider capitalisation and longer-term debt plan
Totals	3,914,000	3,502,193	- 411,807	

General Fund Budget 2024-25 and Proposed Savings

MTFS FFTF Savings 3B	Sept £'000	Current £'000	Variance £'000	Explanation of variance
Leisure Contract Savings	900,000	444,600	- 455,400	Saving is now based on the " Pool in the Park" Business Case. Option 2 was recommended: Keep pool open, remove concessions and increase fees/charges in line with pool prices elsewhere.
Leisure Contract Savings -		388,000	388,000	Part of Energy Service Charge not being charged from 1.4.24
Forensic Review of Council Budgets (General)	750,000	831,676	81,676	Further savings identified
Environmental Health Out Of Hours		8,750	8,750	Further savings identified
Social Prescribing		2,150	2,150	Further savings identified
TOTAL		842,576		
Property Services Savings: CCTV Contract Review	72,000	82,000	10,000	
Property Services Savings: CCTV Infrastructure Review	40,000	39,350	- 650	
Property Services Savings: FM Efficiencies	100,000	200,000	100,000	
Property Services Savings: Removal of Public Conveniences	203,000	204,231	1,231	
Property Services Savings: Removal of Vacant Posts	174,000		- 174,000	Included in salary savings figure in 3A
Property Services Savings: Civic Offices Savings	250,000	72,829	- 177,171	Estimated savings reduced due to ongoing review of Civic Office space occupied and modification requirements and the relation to maintenance service costs.
Serco Grounds Maintenance Contract - Retender	-		-	
Totals	2,489,000	2,273,586	- 215,414	

MTFS FFTF Savings 3C	Sept £'000	Current £'000	Variance £'000	Explanation of variance
Serco Grounds Maintenance Contract - In-Year	TBC	734,240		Contract renegotiated: figure is net of redundancies £40k and HRA adjustment
Micro slice budgets	35,000		- 35,000	Included in forensic review
Procurement (tail spend) and contract savings via Orbis	200,000		- 200,000	Savings part of service spend in forensic saving

General Fund Budget 2024-25 and Proposed Savings

Asset/commercial rationalisation exercise	TBC			Part of wider debt reduction plan
Lease surrender receipts	1,900,000	1,900,000	-	Management agreement does not need purchase/lease payment to Victoria Square. Cost/income from mgt agreement needs further work linked to car park strategy
Increase in commercial rents	TBC		0	Saving to be part of work on commercial estate and asset rationalisation
Totals	2,135,000	2,634,240	499,240	

Source	Estimated Amount 2024/25 £	Saving Included In 2024/25 Budget £	Variation £
MTFS FFTF Savings 3A	3,914,000	3,502,193	- 411,807
MTFS FFTF Savings 3B	2,489,000	2,273,586	- 215,414
MTFS FFTF Savings 3C	2,135,000	2,634,240	499,240
Totals	8,538,000	8,410,019	- 127,981

**SUMMARY OF SAVINGS
2024/25**

APPENDIX 3b

Saving (brief narrative explanation)	£	Narrative
3A MTFS FTFF Savings		
STAFF & RUNNING COSTS		
Staff	2,200,000	Staff budget savings delivered following a service redesign and organisational restructure focused on delivering core services.
Vacancies	100,000	New appointments at mid-point
Running Costs:		
COMMUNITIES		
Community Centres	75,934	The preferred option for each centre is to retain ownership but transfer the asset to a third party (community group, charity, or other organisation) on a long-lease basis. Any transfer would include all associated capital replacement costs, thereby removing all Council subsidy.
Family Service	11,090	Discussions are underway to seek to TUPE the Family Service to a different provider. The objective is to ensure that users of the service will not be impacted whilst removing all Council subsidy.
Sports, Arts & Culture (excludes Leisure Centres and Pool in the Park)	207,000	This saving represents the withdrawal of funding of The Lightbox and voluntary contributions to Woking Arts and Sports Councils. Officers have been working closely with the Lightbox to explore options that support the continuation of the service whilst removing Council subsidy.
PLACE		
Green Infrastructure	54,376	This saving results from a detailed review of budgets and a streamlining of functions within Green Infrastructure.
Business Liaison	132,550	The removal of the Business Liaison function from the Council will be mitigated through closer working with SCC which is a key driver of economic development across Surrey.
Other		
Removal of Grants to External Bodies	691,243	This saving arises from the removal of Community Grants. Officers have been working with community organisations, supporting them to find alternative funding streams and transition away from WBC funding.
NNDR Discretionary Discounts	30,000	Potential savings from revised policy on Discretionary reliefs
Savings in Debt Management Expenses	0	This saving will not now be 2024/25 - part of longer-term debt reduction plan

General Fund Budget 2024-25 and Proposed Savings

Totals	3,502,193	
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MTFS FFTF Savings 3B	Current £'000	
Leisure Contract Savings - incl. Pool in the Park	444,600	Savings delivered through the removal of concessions and increasing fees/charges in line with pool prices elsewhere
Leisure Contract - Reduction in annual energy service charge	388,000	Following discussion with ThamesWey, it has been agreed that the interest and annuity element of the energy service charge allocated to Woking Park should now be removed.
Forensic Review of Council Budgets	831,676	Savings resulting from a methodical review all Council budgets (supplies and services) to reduce spend. This work was informed by service option assessments as part of the Gateway Review Process.
Environmental Health Out Of Hours	8,750	Saving arising from the removal of the Out of Hours Contract.
Social Prescribing	2,150	The Social Prescribing function has been transferred to Spelthorne Borough Council. Users of the service will therefore not be impacted but Council subsidy has been removed.
TOTAL	842,576	
Property Services Savings: CCTV Contract Review	82,000	The current CCTV maintenance contract runs until March 2024. Negotiations have been undertaken to extend this contract and achieve savings.
Property Services Savings: CCTV Infrastructure Review	39,350	
Property Services Savings: FM Efficiencies	200,000	The current Facilities Management contract runs until March 2024. This contract is not being renewed; instead the services will be in-sourced which will deliver savings.
Property Services Savings: Removal of Public Conveniences	204,231	The closure of public toilets (excluding toilet provision within Victoria Place including Wolsey Place shopping centre) has been identified as a potential saving given that this is a discretionary service the Council is not legally obligated to provide.
Property Services Savings: Removal of Vacant Posts		- Vacant posts in drainage, contaminated land, and highway maintenance, have been removed following a service redesign process: figures included in overall staff saving
Property Services Savings: Civic Offices Savings	72,829	Savings have been made through the rationalisation of budgets and reduction of facilities management services.
Serco Grounds Maintenance Contract - Retender		- The current Grounds Maintenance contract runs until March 2025, and work to re-tender the contract to a new specification, which will deliver savings, is underway.
Totals	2,273,586	

General Fund Budget 2024-25 and Proposed Savings

MTFS FFTF Savings 3C	Current £'000	
Serco Grounds Maintenance Contract - In-Year	734,240	A proposal to make savings during the final year of the contract in 2024/25 will be considered by Council. The proposal reduces current service standards to statutory levels.
Micro slice budgets		Saving absorbed in forensic saving
Procurement (tail spend) and contract savings via Orbis		Savings part of service spend in forensic saving
Asset/commercial rationalisation exercise		Savings will now be part of debt reduction plan
Lease surrender receipts	1,900,000	Sale of Victoria Gate now agreed
Increase in commercial rents		
Increase in fees and charges beyond 10/20%		Included in service budgets
Totals	2,634,240	

Source	Saving Actually Included In 2024/25 Budget £	
MTFS FFTF Savings 3A	3,502,193	
MTFS FFTF Savings 3B	2,273,586	
MTFS FFTF Savings 3C	2,634,240	
Totals	8,410,019	

Appendix 4: Service Plans

[TO FOLLOW]

Cover Report for Equality Impact Assessment (EqIAs) supporting the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the process used to develop the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) documents and to outline the cumulative potential implications.

In considering the budget, Woking Borough Council (WBC) must consider its public sector duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity between all irrespective of whether they fall into a protected category such as race, sex, religion, etc. [Read more information about the Council's equality duty.](#)

Having due regard to these duties does not mean that the Council has an absolute obligation to eliminate discrimination but that it must consider how its decisions will contribute towards meeting the duties in the light of all other relevant circumstances such as economic and practical considerations.

This report should be read in conjunction with the EqIAs as [published on the Council website.](#)

1. Background

Due to the serious financial situation the council is faced with, as referred to within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) report, officers embarked on a series of detailed reviews to identify what the minimum viable provision for the service offer. This Gateway Review process was carried out for every service within the council and looked at options for identifying savings, increasing income, or stopping the service altogether. A benchmarking exercise has also been carried out to understand the level of spend and provision of WBC against other similar sized councils. Identified that, in most areas reviewed, the Council has historically spent more than its statistical neighbours. In some service areas there has been increased spend even though the population and household figures have not increased significantly.

The Government intervention and the subsequent issuing of the Section 114 notice compounded the need for reducing the size of the organisation. The issuing of a Section 114 Notice restricts all new spending apart from protecting vulnerable people and statutory services.

The July MTFS report outlined several savings proposals, and these were further developed in the September MTFS report after the resident consultation on non-statutory services.

The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) agreed two guiding principles to support the design of the new council.

- A smaller council focussed on statutory services.
- Discretionary services must be self-funded.

A new vision has been developed which builds on these guiding principles and this is set out in the budget report.

Ahead of making any decision on reducing or stopping any services, a public consultation was initiated on all proposals to change services for residents, to understand the views of

residents and to feed into the decisions required. There is a separate consultation [report](#) outlining the approach and findings of the consultation.

Other service changes under review not included in the consultation or impact assessments include the review of play areas and green spaces. A more detailed review is currently taking place.

2. Approach to developing the Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs)

It is important that the Council seeks to understand the equalities impacts of proposed service changes and any potential mitigations which can be offered. Given the scale and complexity of the proposed change required to balance our budget, the Council's efficiency proposals for 2024/25 have been analysed to understand positive and negative impacts on both residents and staff with protected characteristics, particularly where they may be impacted by multiple efficiency proposals.

The Council has received support from Surrey County Council on the Equality Impact Assessment process. Senior colleagues from Policy and Strategy at Surrey County Council provided a session to WBC colleagues sharing expertise and resources.

The Corporate Leadership Team and Members were briefed on the 16 October 2023 on the approach and the importance of EqIAs in decision making of the proposed savings.

Further support, guidance, expertise, and resources were offered by Local Partnerships to WBC's Equalities officer and officers writing the EqIAs. This was part of our sector support offer from the Local Government Association (LGA). They provided an independent review of each of the EqIAs and supported an EqIA Member review meeting where a small panel of Members provided feedback on the EqIAs.

3. Summary of mitigations

Each Equality Impact Assessment includes a detailed analysis of the impacts of the proposed service changes and how it can be mitigated.

Across all EqIAs the following groups have been identified as potentially mostly impacted.

- Young children and young people aged 16 to 25
- The elderly
- Those who are from a disadvantaged socio-economic background.

Across all EqIAs the following key mitigation themes have been identified.

3.1 Increase in fees and charges

Some savings such as the proposed fees and charges increases for Pool in the Park and changes to day services have been scrutinised in detail including benchmarking to compare the service offer, financial analysis (continues to be monitored) and user data to support decision making on the proposed savings. Consultation with residents, community groups, stakeholders and face-to-face meetings also supported a proposal for price increases to services that were at risk of being removed. This is positive in that it means the service will be maintained; however, this may impact those on concessions.

3.2 Identify other funding streams

Community Grants are discretionary and therefore the Council does not have a legal responsibility to offer them.

Stakeholders have been consulted with to support them and discuss how they can operate without WBC funding. The Volunteer Woking Funding Officer will offer support to identify alternative funding streams, arrange meetings with the local National Lottery funding officer and provide a source of free advice to all the organisations who face a cut in funding.

Organisations have also been asked to provide alternative business models, information about similar offers delivered by neighbouring councils and looking at pricing models to make them self-funding.

On 18 January 2024, members of Woking Borough Council's [Executive agreed to reallocate £601,000 of external funding](#) to support six community projects. In 2022 the Council received £1million from the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), which was launched to help councils build pride in place and increase life chances.

3.3 Identify alternative provision of similar services

Residents of Woking have a choice of health and well-being activities offered by a variety of providers across the borough. This includes private organisations, schools, other nearby local authority facilities, community groups, charities and churches offering activities such as arts, sports and leisure activities. The Council is working to map alternative services and will signpost residents to alternative options.

For example, services such as the translation services can be provided by other partner organisations offering a similar service. An NHS framework is already in place, which will be used to sign-post those needing the translation service.

Business support services are available from a number of organisations across Surrey. Local businesses within Woking will be sign-posted to these organisations when the service is removed. Funding from the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to Surrey County Council and WBC has been earmarked to support local businesses.

The closure of public toilets will impact residents as well as community groups using these when participating in organised activities. Users of these public toilets will be sign-posted to nearby facilities as well as considering the management of these by community groups.

3.4 Build community capacity

There are many organisations providing services to the community in Woking. Going forward WBC could act as the facilitator encouraging and empowering these organisations to work together to provide residents with the offer and support, but with a stronger volunteer base in place. Private organisations could play a pivotal role in supporting these charitable organisations as part of their corporate social responsibility.

3.5 Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Scheme

Consultation with clubs, community groups and other hirers have shown interest in running the pavilions. A Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policy and supporting process, is due to be adopted by Council in February 2024. Many other councils across the country have adopted a similar policy. However, ahead of adopting this policy, engagement with community groups is taking place to ensure there is a robust plan of action. It needs to be acknowledged that the process of transferring assets to community groups will take time to implement.

3.6 Supporting organisations to move to new operating models

Woking Borough Council is working with organisations, encouraging organisations to review their current business models and find an alternative model that will help them to become self-funding. Examples: Community Transport, The Lightbox, Citizens Advice Woking.

4. Conclusion

In view of the Council's current financial constraints, and the resulting need to reduce all subsidies, the Council recognises the potential negative impacts based on the options being considered and has/will as far as is possible put in place mitigating actions to reduce the negative impacts. However, it recognises that it cannot completely remove all impacts.

5. Recommendations

1. Develop a communication plan about all service changes. This will inform residents, community groups, key partners, stakeholders, and businesses of the changes.
2. Develop an aggregated Equality Action Plan which monitors implementation of the mitigations proposed.
3. Propose a mapping exercise of statutory and discretionary service provision including providers. This will enable the Council to work collaboratively and more efficiently in future.
4. Propose future monitoring of the EqlAs as part of performance management and service review plans.

The following Equality Impact Assessments were developed supporting the MTFS. Please note that Equality Impact Assessments are living documents and are updated as new information become available. [Read the published Equality Impact Assessment documents on the Council's website..](#)

Directorate: Place

- Proposed closure of public conveniences (toilets)
- Proposed removal of business support to local businesses and the Business Liaison Team
- Proposed service changes in Neighbourhood Services
-

Directorate: Community

- Proposed increase in fees and charges for Pool in the Park
- Proposed closure of pavilions
- Proposed changes to Centres for the Community: Relocation of day care services
- Proposed removal of sports, arts and cultural support and funding
- Proposed removal of community grants
- Proposed removal of funding and support to Citizens Advice Woking
- Proposed removal of funding for Woking People of Faith
- Proposed removal of funding for Woking Community Transport
- Proposed removal of funding for the York Road Project
- Proposed removal of funding for Woking Asian Business Forum
- Proposed removal of funding for The Lightbox
- Proposed removal of Woking Interpreting and Translation Service
-

Directorate: Corporate Resources

- Proposed changes to opening times of the Contact Centre telephone lines

EXECUTIVE – 1 FEBRUARY 2024

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGETS 2024-25

Executive Summary

This report sets out the Council's final Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets for 2024/25.

Under the Government's current rent setting regime, social rents should increase by up to CPI+1% each year. The Government has confirmed that there will be no further cap imposed for 2024/25. Therefore, rents are proposed to increase by 7.7% (based on September CPI of 6.7%) from 1 April 2024. Total rental income is forecast to increase by circa £1.79 million to circa £20 million, excluding void losses.

Service charges, including energy charges, are based on the cost of the service being provided. The Section 151 Officer has delegated authority to vary service charges in line with external factors.

The 2024/25 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget includes an increase in interest costs that will be incurred from borrowing an additional £2.5 million to support the capital programme for housing. This is necessary to fund high risk fire safety remedial works, along with a number of Decent Homes improvements. Work is ongoing to understand the capital funding requirements to achieve 100% Decent Homes in future years, along with completing the lower risk fire safety remedial works. It is expected that future years will see a continued need for substantial capital investment in our Council homes and this work will need to feed into the work on the 30-year HRA Business Plan.

The HRA is forecast to make an estimated surplus of £960,279 in 2024/25. This is an important step towards securing a sustainable HRA. Housing and Finance will be updating the 30-year HRA Business Plan during early 2024/25 based on the 2024/25 budget assumptions on income and expenditure, the development of MTFs budgets using the latest CPI inflation rate, stock condition survey data and latest contractual agreements. This will also involve the development of growth and savings assumptions for updating revenue and capital expenditure budgets for the 30-year period. The exercise will involve completing scenario planning and stress testing of all options considered.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

- (i) the Final Housing Revenue Account budgets for 2024-25, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed; and**
- (ii) with effect from 1 April 2024, rents be increased by 7.7%.**

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To approve the resources necessary to implement the Council's objectives for Housing and to enable the Council to determine charges to tenants for 2024/25.

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

Housing Revenue Account Budgets 2024-25

Background Papers: None.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper sets out the Council's final Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets (Appendix 1) for 2024/25.
- 1.2 Detailed explanations of the changes and pressures within the different elements of the budget are set out in the sections below. Appendix 1 of the report provides a breakdown of the 2024/25 budget. The HRA is forecast to make an estimated surplus of £960,279 in 2024/25. This represents an important step towards the longer-term stability of the HRA.

2.0 Forecast Outturn

- 2.1 Adjustments to the revised estimates for 2023/24 have been made to reflect variations identified during the year to date.
- 2.2 Repairs budgets are forecast to overspend significantly by £2.4 million. This is in part due to Brockhill Extra-Care waking watch and evacuation staff required to manage the fire safety risk to the building, coupled with a general overspend on voids and repairs (including some additional emergency communal heating works).
- 2.3 Supervision and Management budgets are showing an underspend of £637,000 due to adjustments to recharges and staff vacancies. The energy budgets are also forecast to underspend.
- 2.4 The forecast outturn assumes a revenue receipt of £589,000 from ThamesWey in 2023/24 for the reimbursement of Sheerwater Home Loss and Disturbance payments.
- 2.5 Overall, the HRA is forecast to overspend by £1.23 million in 2023/24, resulting in a deficit position of £2.57 million for the whole year.

3.0 Approach to Budget Setting 2024/25

- 3.1 The final budgets in this paper should be considered alongside the Capital Programme report elsewhere on the agenda, which will influence the overall budget position.
- 3.2 Housing and Finance will be updating the 30-year HRA Business Plan during early 2024/25 based on the 2024/25 budget assumptions on income and expenditure, the development of MTFs budgets using the latest CPI inflation rate, stock condition survey data and latest contractual agreements. This will also involve the development of growth and savings assumptions for updating revenue and capital expenditure budgets for the 30-year period. The exercise will involve completing scenario planning and stress testing of all options considered.

Management and Administration

- 3.3 During the course of 2023/24, a review of recharge allocations has been undertaken to ensure that they are fair and reasonable to the HRA. The assumptions for 2024/25 include these adjusted recharge assumptions. The allocation has been reviewed for the final budget to ensure the apportionment reflects the current structure.
- 3.4 Salary and other central costs have been allocated to the HRA in accordance with normal accounting rules to show the full cost of the service. The budgets are set and monitored in a pre-allocated format to make it possible to see the overall impact rather than just a proportion of the overall cost/variance which may be allocated to an individual service. Some staff posts are capitalised to delivery of the Housing Asset Management Plan.

Housing Revenue Account Budgets 2024-25

- 3.5 A review of recharges to the Housing Revenue Account has been undertaken back to 2019/20 (the last year of accounts that are not yet fully audited). The £344,000 adjustment has now been built into the budget for 2024/25. The overall adjustment of £2.1 million is built into the relevant years and has improved the HRA position by £2.1 million overall:

Year	£'000
2019/20	292
2020/21	283
2021/22	286
2022/23	518
2023/24	380
2024/25	344
TOTAL	2,102

4.0 Rent and Other Charges

- 4.1 Under the Government's current rent setting regime, social rents should increase by up to CPI+1% each year. In light of the cost of living crisis and high inflation rate, the Government imposed a ceiling of 7% from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. On 4 January 2024, the Regulator of Social Housing published its annual rent limit guidance, which confirmed that rents for 2024/25 would increase in line with the current Policy Statement without any cap.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the Council increases rents based on current CPI+1% limit in line with the Government Rent Standard. The budgeted rents have been prepared on this basis and rents have been increased by 7.7% (based on September CPI of 6.7%).
- 4.3 In 2024/25, there are fifty-three rent weeks, the extra one week will generate additional rent net of voids in the region of £385,000.
- 4.4 Total rental income is forecast to increase by circa £1.79 million in 2024/25 to circa £20.03 million excluding voids.

Recovery of Charges

- 4.5 Service charges, including energy charges, are based on the cost of the service being provided. The Section 151 Officer has delegated authority to vary service charges in line with external factors.
- 4.6 Energy charges are levied on a per block basis based on cost. This allows energy costs to be recharged to tenants on a more detailed basis.
- 4.7 All energy costs within this report relating to gas are using predicted OFGEM capped rates for Quarter 2 of 2024/25 of 6.38p per kWh for residential usage. This is based on the current Quarter 1 rate of 7.49p per kWh with a predicted reduction of 14% being publicised by various energy analysts for the start of Quarter 2. This is a very delicately balanced position especially with the issues around the current states of military and political disruption in the middle east affecting fuel prices. This approach has also been taken as new contract rates for April 2024 are not yet available from our current energy supplier. For sites where energy is provided by ThamesWey, rates fluctuate month by month so to agree a fixed recharge for the year, officers have taken the same approach and used the predicted OFGEM capped rate. This approach is considered fair and reasonable as residents would likely be charged at the same rate should they be paying their bills direct to a supplier.

- 4.8 All energy costs in this report relating to non-ThamesWey charged electricity are currently based on out of contract rates of 38.25p per kWh. As it is not possible to increase charges to tenants within the year, once charges are fixed, the approach taken is to set budgets at this level. Once contract issues are resolved, the rates are likely to fall to around 28p per kWh. If/when this happens the recharges to residents will be reviewed and energy budgets will be reforecast. Recharges relating to ThamesWey provided electricity are set at the contract rate of 7p per kWh, which is way below the OFGEM capped rate but standing charges imposed by ThamesWey are considerably higher which off-sets the preferential rate.
- 4.9 In summary, energy budgets continue to be very difficult to predict so the approach taken allows the Council to best protect itself against future changes in pricing whilst keeping recharges to tenants fair and reasonable.
- 4.10 Housing-related support charges have also been reviewed. From 1 April 2023, tenancy support charges were introduced (reflecting the work now undertaken by the Independent Support team) and will be eligible for Housing Benefit /Universal Credit. The assumption is that any housing-related support charges cover the cost of this service. Tenants will however receive Housing Benefit where applicable. Careline charges have had the uplift applied in line with the Fees and Charges report in November 2023.

Implementation Date

- 4.11 The new rents will be applied from the first Monday in April (i.e. 1 April 2024).
- 4.12 Service charges will be applied from 1 April 2024

5.0 Prudential Borrowing

- 5.1 HRA interest charges for pre 2016/17 borrowing are fixed at the Council's average borrowing rate on 31 March 2016. HRA borrowing from April 2017 onwards are charged at the annual average 50-year PWLB borrowing rate. This ensures that General Fund investment decisions made by the Council do not impact the HRA.
- 5.2 Since the housing service returned in-house in April 2022, it has become clear that the Council's housing stock is in a poor condition and requires significant capital investment. In July 2023, the Council self-referred to the Regulator of Social Housing for potentially breaching the Homes Standard. Following ongoing engagement, the Council received a Regulatory Notice from the Regulator on 14 December 2023 for breaching the Homes Standard in respect of fire safety.
- 5.3 A programme of works has been developed and costed for the high risk fire safety remedial works and Decent Homes works at circa £37 million. These will need to be delivered over the next 2-3 years. The capital budget sought for 2024/25 is circa £16.8 million which will focus on the high risk fire safety remedial works, along with around half of the outstanding Decent Homes improvements.
- 5.4 This marks a significant upscaling of the Housing capital programme, which has stood at around £4 million for a number of years. The 2024/25 programme will be primarily funded from depreciation; Sheerwater capital receipts (from Purple, Red and Yellow phases); historic capital receipts from Right to Buy sales and disposal of a small number of void HRA assets. The balance of approximately £2.5 million will need to be funded through borrowing. The additional interest costs have been incorporated into the 2024/25 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget.
- 5.5 The updated forecast for HRA interest costs is £5.61million in 2024/25.

Housing Revenue Account Budgets 2024-25

- 5.6 Work is ongoing to understand the capital funding requirements to achieve 100% Decent Homes in future years, along with completing the lower risk fire safety remedial works. It is expected that future years will see a continued need for substantial capital investment in our Council homes and this work will need to feed into the work on the 30-year HRA Business Plan.
- 5.7 The 2024/25 final budget makes no allowance for repayment of the debt taken on for Self-Financing or for the repayment of the borrowing relating to historic new build developments. The borrowing relates to long life assets which are fully maintained.

6.0 Robustness of the Budget and Risks

- 6.1 It is important to consider the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of reserves for the purpose of maintaining the financial health of the Housing Revenue Account. The key risks are set out in the following paragraphs.

HRA New Build Developments

- 6.2 The HRA budget assumes there are no HRA new build developments during 2024/25.

Repairs, Maintenance, and Management and Contractual Inflation

- 6.3 Housing Services were brought in house from 1 April 2022. The Council has recently commenced a new contract for the provision of gas servicing and repairs and is currently procuring a new responsive repairs contractor. Therefore, the cost forecasts for 2024/25 are based on assumptions.
- 6.4 The total budget for repairs and compliance for 2024/25 is forecast at £3.82 million.

Major Repairs Contribution

- 6.5 As per the 1 April 2017 Item 8 Determination, depreciation is to be charged to the HRA with effect from 1 April 2017 in accordance with proper accounting practices. The depreciation replaces the Major Repairs Contribution and is transferred to the Major Repairs Reserve to be used on capital works to the stock or repaying debt. HRA depreciation is calculated by dividing the total asset value of Council Dwellings by their average useful economic life. The depreciation amount is estimated to be £4.27 million in 2024/25. The depreciation will contribute towards funding the Annual Maintenance Plan to for 2024/25, including capitalised staff costs.

Sheerwater Regeneration

- 6.6 Under the Sheerwater Regeneration project, approximately 426 HRA dwellings were due to be demolished. This placed considerable pressure on the HRA due to the loss of income and ongoing costs of maintaining empty homes.
- 6.7 In October 2023, the Council agreed to retain and refurbish circa 100 HRA homes. These will generate extra income of around £650,000 to the HRA once they are all occupied. As the timescales for bringing homes back into use are still unknown, rental income for 2024/25 assumes that occupancy will remain at 56 for 2024/25.

Reserves and Balances

- 6.8 The estimated reserves position for 2024/25 after adjustments are made to previous years recharges to the HRA is £1.28 million. Rebuilding reserves is an important step towards the longer-term stability of the HRA.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 As detailed in the report, the Council will be able to set a balanced HRA budget for 2024/25 with an estimated amount in the region of £960,279 being transferred from the HRA into reserves. This could be invested back into much needed capital improvements to HRA stock and is an important step towards securing a sustainable HRA.

8.0 Corporate Strategy

- 8.1 The report sets out the draft budgets for managing and maintaining the Council's housing stock during 2024/25. Provision of housing is a key priority within the Council's Corporate Plan.

9.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 9.1 The financial implications are explicit in the report.
- 9.2 Risks to budgets have been identified throughout the year and will be reported quarterly as part of the Council's new Performance and Financial Monitoring process. Specific risks have been set out in the report.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 9.3 No equalities implications noted.
- 9.4 The staffing budgets are based on the new service structure following the Fit for the Future consultation from 22 November 2023 and 10 January 2024.

Legal

- 9.5 The Council is under a statutory duty under S74 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to maintain a Housing Revenue Account and account for income and expenditure incurred in relation to housing and other property provided under Part II of the Housing Act 1985.

10.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 10.1 No public consultations have been undertaken in preparing this report.
- 10.2 The Housing Service will be undertaking a comprehensive survey of tenants during February and March 2024.

REPORT ENDS

**Appendix 1
HRA 2024-25 Budget**

	2023/24 Budget £'000	2023/24 Forecast (Dec'23) £'000	2024/25 Budget £'000
Income			
Dwelling rents	(19,494)	(20,423)	(22,254)
Less: Voids	185	1,830	1,872
Heating income	(733)	(1,221)	(2,270)
Service charges	(1,152)	(1,630)	(1,591)
Other income	-	(589)	-
Total income	(21,194)	(22,033)	(24,243)
Expenditure			
Supervision & Management			
Estate Management	5,730	5,535	5,769
Rent Accounting/Collection	363	256	312
Home Support Service	774	791	888
Tenant Participation	63	46	96
Repairs Admin	885	877	796
Democratic Process	1,742	1,424	1,372
Transfer to hardship fund	10	-	10
	9,567	8,929	9,243
Provision for bad debts	210	210	267
Repairs & Improvements			
Day to Day Repairs	2,788	5,314	3,403
Planned Maintenance	434	398	421
	3,222	5,712	3,824
Major Repairs (Depreciation)	3,956	4,196	4,272
Capital Financing			
Interest	5,541	5,487	5,607
Debt Management expenses	36	71	71
Less: Interest income on balances	(1)	(1)	(1)
	5,576	5,557	5,677
Total expenditure	22,531	24,604	23,283
Transfer to reserves	0	0	960
Transfer from reserves	(1,337)	(2,571)	0
Surplus/Deficit	0	0	0
No. of properties		3,386	3,296
HRA reserves position			
2022/23			£'000
2022/23 HRA reserves before adjustment for recharges			(1,515)
Proposed adjustment to recharges for 2019/20 to 2021/22			(861)
Transfer to HRA reserves - adjustment to recharges 2022/23			(518)
Reserves - closing 2022/23			(2,894)

2023/24	£'000
Reserves - Opening 2023/24	(2,894)
Transfer from reserves	<u>2,571</u>
Estimated reserves - closing 2023/24	<u>(323)</u>
2024/25	£'000
Estimated reserves - Opening 2024/25	(323)
Transfer to reserves for working balance of £100 per property	(330)
Balance Transfer to reserves	<u>(631)</u>
Estimated reserves - closing 2024/25	<u>(1,283)</u>

EXECUTIVE – 1 FEBRUARY 2024

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023-24 TO 2027-28

Executive Summary

The Capital Programme sets out the investments required to deliver the Council's key strategies and objectives. This was formerly known as the Investment Programme as it included revenue projects funded from reserves. The option of reserves funding is not currently available, and any transformation projects will have to be funded by the use of capital receipts, as agreed by Government. All revenue expenditure will now therefore be captured in the base revenue service budgets.

The General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets for 2024/25 (which appear elsewhere on the agenda) incorporate the impact of the borrowing taken to carry out the Capital Programme.

As discussed in the Section 114 Notice issued in June 2023, the Council's previous Capital and Investment strategies have resulted in unaffordable borrowing, inadequate steps to repay that borrowing, and high values of irrecoverable loan investments. The Capital Programme has therefore been largely suspended with provisions only for items such as urgent health and safety and regulatory works, Housing Asset Management Programmes funded by the Housing Revenue Account, and payments only being made to companies and joint ventures to cover business cases agreed with the Commissioners\DLUHC. As detailed in this report, only projects complying with the Council's capital principles have been included in the Capital Programme.

The Council's Improvement and Recovery Programme is ongoing and Officers continue to work constructively with the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in their review of the Council's borrowing.

The above factors have been key considerations in the preparation and review of the 2024/25 Capital Programme.

Appendix 5 provides a glossary explaining the technical terms used in this report.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

- (i) the Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2027/28 be approved subject to reports on projects where appropriate; and**
- (ii) the proposed financing arrangements be approved.**

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To recommend to Council that it approves the capital resources for 2023/24 onwards considered necessary to support the Council's service plans and objectives.

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

Background Papers: None.

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Date Published: 24 January 2024

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Capital Programme sets out the expenditure necessary to support the achievement of the Council's strategies and objectives.
- 1.2 Appendix 5 provides a glossary explaining the technical terms used in this report.

2.0 Approach to updating the Capital Programme

- 2.1 The Section 114 Notice issued in June 2023, stated that the Council's previous Capital and Investment strategies have resulted in unaffordable borrowing, inadequate steps to repay that borrowing, and high values of irrecoverable loan investments. The General Fund Budget Report elsewhere on the agenda provides an update on the Council's financial position. Due to the issues detailed in the s114 Notice and the budget report, the Capital Programme has been largely suspended with provisions only for items meeting the Capital Principles outlined below.
- 2.2 In July 2023 the following Capital Planning Principles were adopted by Council for the General Fund Capital Programme year 2024/25 and the period of this MTFS. Proposals that do not fall within these 'Capital Principles' will not be included within the Capital Programme.
 - Items of programming that relate to essential health and safety works and deliver compliance to the regulations within in the Council's property estate.
 - Essential investment in Information & Communications Technology to ensure that the Council has fit for purpose and secure tools and infrastructure to support operations generally where there is a suitable business case to support such investment.
 - Items where - following support from Government and from Commissioners - specific resources are provided to the Council by Government to complete or partially complete certain specified schemes that were already in delivery by the various companies owned by the Council when the Section 114 Notice was issued.
 - Any schemes that can be shown to be wholly funded from external resources without implying additional cost burdens for the Council.
 - Where proposals are estimated to return a measurable revenue saving; for example, leasing of the Council's commercial property portfolio which may require modest upfront capital investment and which then return a beneficial income stream to the revenue budget.
 - In addition, proposals funded by the Housing Revenue Account will be developed alongside these General Fund principles with the aim of supporting a sustainable HRA 30 year business plan.
- 2.3 The attached programme has been collated on this basis including only expenditure meeting the above principles. If a project is externally funded consideration needs to be given as to whether the project will generate additional maintenance costs in the future.
- 2.4 Officers are also continuing to work constructively with the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in their review of the Council's borrowing.
- 2.5 This report was formerly known as the Investment Programme as it included revenue projects funded from reserves. The option of reserves funding is not currently available and therefore all revenue projects have been incorporated into the service revenue budget reports and not part of this programme from 2024/25 onwards. The 2023/24 expenditure on the programme does include some revenue items as this reflects the approach taken when the 2023/24 budgets were set in February 2023.

3.0 Overview of the Capital Programme

- 3.1 The Capital Programme lists all the Council’s projects, the summary costs of which are shown in total in Appendix 1 and in more detail in Appendices 3 and 4.
- 3.2 For each project a proposed source of funding is identified (for example capital receipts, grant, development contributions, or borrowing). Actual funding decisions will be taken at the end of the year to optimise use of resources. The Capital Programme in itself is not a source of funding; it is the list of projects together with a summary of the implications on the resources available. Projects also need to go through the project approval process.
- 3.3 The following appendices are attached to this report:

Appendix	Title	Description
1	CP Summary	Sets out the total funded projects in the Capital Programme.
2	Financing summary	A summary of how the General Fund and Housing Capital Programme projects will be financed.
3	Housing Capital Programme	A breakdown of the projects included in the Housing Capital Programme (HCP) where allowance will be made in the General Fund or HRA revenue budgets.
4	General Fund Projects	A list of projects included in the Capital Programme (allowance made in the General Fund budget).
4a	IT Programme	A breakdown of the IT programme line in Appendix 4.
5	Glossary	An explanation of the technical terms used in the IP.

4.0 General Fund Capital Programme

- 4.1 The current and committed project details are set out in Appendix 4.
- 4.2 Where external funding is expected towards the cost of a project this is indicated against each project in the programme. If the external funding is specific to a project, or type of project, those external resources cannot be made available to fund other Capital Programme projects.

5.0 Housing Capital Programme

- 5.1 The total Asset Management Plan budget for investment in the Council’s housing stock is usually funded by a depreciation contribution to the Major Repairs Reserve which is the value of depreciation charged on Council Dwellings. This contribution is estimated to be £4,272,000 in 2024/25. As detailed in the paragraphs below, and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget report elsewhere on the agenda, significantly more capital expenditure is required in order to ensure the HRA meets its statutory obligations.
- 5.2 The breakdown of the Woking Borough Council Homes Section of the Housing Capital Programme (Appendix 3) is illustrative, and priorities will be agreed during the year. The Asset Management Plan is based on stock condition surveys which will be reviewed to develop the Asset Management Strategy through the financial year and ensuring the most urgent catch up works are prioritised.
- 5.3 The Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) item on the Housing Capital Programme is funded by a £1,338,000 grant provided as part of the Department of Health’s Better Care Fund. This funding level has been confirmed up until 2025/26. There is no provision in the capital programme for the Council to provide additional discretionary grants.

- 5.4 Since the housing service returned in-house in April 2022, it has become clear that the Council's housing stock is in a poor condition and requires significant capital investment. In July 2023, the Council self-referred to the Regulator of Social Housing for potentially breaching the Homes Standard. Following ongoing engagement, the Council received a Regulatory Notice from the Regulator on 14 December 2023 for breaching the Homes Standard in respect of fire safety.
- 5.5 A programme of works has been developed and costed for the high risk fire safety remedial works and Decent Homes works at circa £37 million. These will need to be delivered over the next 2-3 years. The capital budget sought for 2024/25 is circa £16.8 million which will focus on the high risk fire safety remedial works, along with around half of the outstanding Decent Homes improvements.
- 5.6 This marks a significant upscaling of the Housing capital programme, which has stood at around £4 million for a number of years. The 2024/25 programme will be primarily funded from depreciation; Sheerwater capital receipts (from Purple, Red and Yellow phases); historic capital receipts from Right to Buy sales and disposal of a small number of void HRA assets. The balance of approximately £2.5 million will need to be funded through borrowing with the additional interest costs incorporated into the 2024/25 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget.
- 5.7 Work is ongoing to understand the capital funding requirements to achieve 100% Decent Homes in future years, along with completing the lower risk fire safety remedial works. It is expected that future years will see a continued need for substantial capital investment in our Council homes and this work will need to feed into the work on the 30-year HRA Business Plan.

Sheerwater Refurbishments

- 5.8 Following the issue of the S114 notice, the Council agreed that the existing Development Agreement between the Council and ThamesWey for the delivery of the Sheerwater regeneration project be brought to an end and no new phases would commence following those currently under construction. In October 2023, it was agreed that the Council would retain and progress the refurbishment of around 100 homes within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which is forecast to generate additional net income to the HRA of circa £650,000 per annum. The cost of these refurbishments is estimated at £2.9 million and this will need to be met from capital receipts from disposal of empty HRA homes within the Sheerwater regeneration area.

Provision of New Housing

- 5.9 Local Authorities can retain an element of Right to Buy receipts locally to be used on one for one replacement housing. Currently these receipts can be used to fund up to 40% of the cost of the replacement housing and must be used within 5 years or passed to the Government. These funds have all been committed to new affordable housing schemes in recent years. Due to the position of both the General Fund and the HRA consideration needs to be given on whether these receipts should be retained going forward.

Sheerwater Regeneration

- 5.10 Following the issue of the S114 notice on 7 June 2023, it became clear that the Council cannot afford, and ThamesWey cannot rely on, the future borrowing required to complete the Sheerwater Regeneration. In July 2023, the Council agreed that the existing Development Agreement between the Council and ThamesWey for the delivery of the Sheerwater Regeneration Project be brought to an end and no new phases would commence following those currently under construction. A business case for funding of £57.7 million (including land

payments and professional costs) was developed and discussed with Government in order to complete these active construction phases of the Sheerwater regeneration.

5.11 The Sheerwater loan facilities in the Capital Programme are the amounts detailed in the business cases submitted to the Commissioners and DLUHC plus expenditure incurred under the former loan facility arrangements incurred early in 2023/24 prior to the business case submission.

6.0 Priorities

6.1 The projects were previously included within the Capital Programme using the priorities established by the Capital Strategy outlined below. Due to the financial position of the Council the Capital Programme now only makes provisions for items meeting the Capital Principles outlined in section 2 above.

- schemes that are essential to comply with Health and Safety or security obligations;
- schemes that are essential to enable the Council to carry on its business with economy, efficiency and effectiveness, including electronic service delivery;
- schemes that are for essential maintenance of assets;
- schemes that enable the Council to further the objectives of the Corporate Strategy;
- schemes that secure or enhance the income base; and
- schemes that secure reductions in the cost base.

7.0 Reporting of Project Progress

7.1 The Executive receives a quarterly report of progress on projects. The report focuses on active projects and shows the project progress and assesses overall project risk as well as the total cost of projects (including costs incurred in previous years).

7.2 When a project is planned, a project mandate is prepared and these mandates are used to update the Capital Programme. Spending should only commence on a project once it has been through an authorisation process and the budget released.

7.3 Further detail on active projects is reported to the Executive through the project monitoring process.

8.0 Schemes included within the Financed Capital Programme

8.1 The Capital Programme includes the following new schemes which have been added since the Investment Programme was approved in February 2023. The items added to the programme are indicated below and further details can be found in Appendices 3 and 4.

- Play Area Works (Funded by UKSPF Grant\Borrowing)
- Parks and Other Green Space Works (UKSPG Grant Funded)
- West Byfleet Recreation Ground tennis courts
- Pool in the Park Urgent and Essential Works

Project Updates

- 8.2 The following wording provides a brief summary of the major projects included on the capital programme.

ICT Capital Programme

- 8.3 ICT Capital Spend requirement; To ensure that Woking has a robust, resilient, and flexible core technology foundation we require investment in our wide area network and internet, Wi-Fi offering, virtual server estate, data storage, security, and backup solutions. In addition, ongoing and improved functionality within Finance and Housing requires two major application upgrades, and moving our cash receipting software to a hosted solution ensures ongoing PCIDSS (payment card industry data security standard) compliance.
- 8.4 Channel shift return on investment; This is a proposal to invest £700k in Customer Relationship management; telephony and contact centre; and web publishing and forms infrastructure over the coming two years. Around 50% is core infrastructural investment (maintaining a secure website, basic online services, maintaining phone lines). Around 50% (£350k) is related to 'channel shift' efforts – upgrading from the minimum technical provision, to supporting better, cheaper services. The modelling show that this additional £350k investment will result in returns of £350k in year three from the revenue budget. The main source of savings will occur through the reduction of staffing. Primarily through greater self serve by residents and customers, and greater efficiencies in back office processes. A further report on the Channel Shift Project will be received by the Executive at its meeting on 21 March 2024.

Community Fund Committed Grant Awards (Linkable and New Life Church)

- 8.5 The Community Fund now only includes grants which the Council are contractually committed to for existing projects and will cease from 2024/25 onwards. The programme includes a provision for grant awards to Linkable and New Life Church in 2023/24 which were approved by the Executive on 10 December 2020 and 27 February 2020 respectively.

Road Safety Audit works to complete the Woking Integrated Transport Plan (WITP) Project

- 8.6 Following the completion of the Woking Integrated Transport Plan works it is necessary to carry out a Road Safety Audit in order for the responsibility for maintaining the network to be transferred to Surrey County Council. This is included in the budget for the project previously presented to the Executive.

Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)

- 8.7 In July 2019 the Council was awarded a £95 million grant from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Housing Infrastructure Fund administered by Homes England. The grant was to be used to make improvements to the A320 Guildford Road and Victoria Arch, to improve pedestrian and cycle routes and replace the railway bridge.
- 8.8 As reported to the Executive on the 5th October 2023, a joint decision between WBC and Homes England has been made to close the project. Officers are discussing the grant funding position with Homes England. The residual property assets acquired under the scheme will be reviewed as part of the Council's wider asset disposal scheme. The expenditure included in the Capital Programme for 2023/24 is the essential remaining spend required in order to bring the scheme to a close.
- 8.9 To date £34.5m has been received in grant funding relating to the scheme.

Asset Management Plan (AMP) & Pool in the Park Capital Maintenance

- 8.10 The AMP complies with the capital principles outlined above and only includes essential works. The s114 notice issued in 2023 referred to the repairs and maintenance budgets being insufficient to maintain the Council's property portfolio. Catch up works are required to ensure the Council's properties are maintained to an acceptable standard. £20m over the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) period (at £5m p.a. from 2024/25) has been added to the capital programme for these additional works. Stock Condition surveys will need to be carried to establish the full scope of works required and the estimated cost.
- 8.11 The 2023/24 AMP budget has been held at £1m while these stock condition surveys are scheduled. Any slippage due to under spends in previous years has not been brought forward.
- 8.12 The General Fund 2024/25 Budget assumes that the Pool in the Park will remain open and the Pool in the Park budgets are based on a Options Appraisal that will be recommended to Council on 8th February. A stock condition survey was carried out to inform the Options Appraisal and identified £2,593,000 in capital repairs and maintenance costs. These costs have been included in the Capital Programme over the MTFP period.

Purchase of Winston Lodge

- 8.13 £512,000 is included in the Capital Programme for the committed purchase of Winston Lodge as part of the Co-Plan Development and to facilitate Seymour's (current owners of Winston Lodge) relocation to Victoria Place. This purchase was committed to in 2021/22. Any further acquisitions under this development should either be suspended or do not progress without specific approval by the Corporate Leadership Team and Executive. No budget provision has been made for further acquisitions.

Group Loan Facilities

- 8.14 The loan facilities shown in the Capital Programme for ThamesWey and Victoria Square Woking Ltd (VSWL) are based on business cases approved by the Commissioners and the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC). 2023/24 expenditure incurred prior to the business cases has also been included. There is no provision built into the programme for future Business Cases.

Playgrounds Improvements

- 8.15 This provision enables the most urgent play area works to be carried out where the Council has a legal duty (as landowner) to maintain a condition to ensure health and safety for users. Works will reduce the ongoing maintenance burden and pressure on existing / future budgets by bringing the facility into a better condition and prolong the life of these play areas. Specific works will include replacement and refurbishment of safety surfacing and equipment. This expenditure will be funded through the Council's UKSPF allocation. This amount also includes £5k held in retention from the play area refurbishment projects completed in 2023/24, for which the budget was previously agreed.

Parks and Other Green Space Works

- 8.16 The budgeted £140k is for a package of parks and green space improvement works, which will be funded entirely from the Council's UKSPF allocation for 2024/25. These works will include improvements to existing footpaths, access roads and car parks within public green spaces, as well as other refurbishment / improvement works to other park features. The identified works are required for the Council to meet its legal duties (as landowner) to maintain its public spaces in a suitable condition for the health and safety of users and to reduce the current maintenance burden by bringing facilities into a better condition.

Tennis Courts

- 8.17 This project will deliver two new tarmac tennis courts on the existing ball courts at West Byfleet Recreation Ground. The proposed project budget of £128k will be covered in part by neighbourhood CIL (£72k agreed) and an external grant from the Lawn Tennis Association (£56k). The new tennis courts will be fenced with a gate entry system. Users will be able to book the courts through an online booking system. The income received will cover the cost of ongoing maintenance, with a sinking fund to cover future refurbishment costs.

Westfield Avenue Compound & Egley Road

- 8.18 These projects are included in the Capital Programme in order to bring them to a position where they can be sold.

Improvement and Recovery Programme (formerly Fit for the Future External Support)

- 8.19 External support will continue to be required to help achieve savings and drive transformation under the Improvement and Recovery Programme (formerly known as the Fit for the Future Programme). This expenditure will be revenue and not capital. Usually revenue expenditure cannot be financed by capital resources such as borrowing or capital receipts.
- 8.20 On 6 February 2018 the Secretary of State issued a direction under Section 16(2)(b) of the Local Government Act 2003 and guidance under section 15(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2003 to allow local authorities to spend capital receipts on any project that is designed to generate ongoing revenue savings in the delivery of public services and/or transform service delivery to reduce costs/produce savings. The Improvement and Recovery Programme fits this criteria and therefore this item is financed by capital receipts on the Capital Programme.
- 8.21 The Council has a capital receipt available through the sale of Cleary Court, agreed during 2022/23. This receipt has been earmarked to be used to fund the Improvement and Recovery Programme.
- 8.22 The detailed proposals of the Improvement and Recovery Programme were set out in the March Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) paper. On the 30th March 2023 the Council resolved that approval of the proposed Flexible Use of Capital Receipts in 2023/24 and submission of a plan to DLUHC be delegated to the Strategic Director – Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder. This plan was submitted to DLUHC in April 2023. The amount in the Capital Programme is the updated estimated expenditure under the scheme.

River Wey Flood Prevention

- 8.23 The Council's contribution to the above project would be made up of transferring flood scheme land that is already in the Council's possession (following capital programme funding for land management in Byfleet in November 2018), contributions in kind, and possible General Fund land maintenance costs. There is no provision for the project in the Capital Programme as no additional capital resources would be required.

9.0 Schemes in excess of £1m

9.1 In accordance with the Notice of Motion agreed by Council on 12 July 2007 the following schemes have costs exceeding £1m, not all of which have been contractually committed:

- Loan to Victoria Square Woking Ltd
- Old Woking Community Centre Project (Woking College)
- Improvement and Recovery Programme (formerly Fit for the Future External Support) (funded by capital receipts)
- Sheerwater Regeneration - Loan to TDL
- Mandatory Disabled Facilities (Disabled Facilities Grant – DFG)

9.2 Other items in excess of £1 million include the Asset Management Plan, ICT Programme and Housing Repairs and Improvements programme which are each made up of a number of projects which vary in size.

9.3 Reports seeking approval to schemes will be made to the Executive as appropriate.

9.4 Approved loans to group companies in total exceed £1 million and are released as required, providing they are within the sums agreed in the Group Business Plans. Loans are now only made based on the approved business cases agreed with DLUHC.

10.0 Schemes Removed

10.1 The following schemes have been removed from the Capital Programme at this stage. These may be added back at a later date once sufficient resources are available or if it is determined that they are required;

- Victoria Way Central Reservation
- Rainwater Gardens Project
- Digital Centre of Excellence - Incubator Support Service
- Buzz Theatre
- River Wey Flood Prevention - Byfleet
- HIF Victoria Arch and Integrated South Side Works
- New Hostel Provision (funded from capital receipts/borrowing)
- HRA Market Purchases
- Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) Acquisitions

11.0 Schemes not yet taken account of

11.1 Due to the financial position of the Council there is very limited scope in what schemes it can deliver. Where possible schemes have been suspended and only items complying with the Council's capital principles have been included.

12.0 Release of funding

12.1 The Council's Capital Strategy sets out the arrangements for managing the initiation and approval of projects and includes a delegated arrangement for the Executive to agree new schemes which fall within the following parameters:

"Where the scheme is a new scheme the proposal will be scheduled for consideration by the Executive. The Executive will be granted delegated authority to agree schemes which can be contained within the following parameters set by the Council:

- the capital cost of each individual project does not exceed £5m;
- the aggregate capital cost of schemes approved by the Executive under this delegation does not exceed £10 million in any one financial year; and
- the cost can be contained within the authorised borrowing limits.

The setting of the Authorised and Operational borrowing limits is reserved to the Council. Where the scheme is expected to be outside of the above parameters the scheme will need the approval of the Council."

12.2 The use of this delegated authority is reported in the Financial Monitoring Reporting (formerly known as the Green Book).

13.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

13.1 The financial implications of the Capital Programmes have been incorporated in the draft General Fund and Housing Revenue Account estimates. The Prudential Borrowing implications have been built into the Treasury Management Estimates.

13.2 Later phases of the General Fund programme, and the progression of any projects being developed, rely on the identification and receipt of other new resources to enable projects to proceed.

13.3 The project management arrangements provide for risk analysis as part of the improved control of Capital Programme projects; this seeks to minimise and manage risk.

Equalities and Human Resources

13.4 The Council has some core resources to manage the Capital Programme but relies upon third party consultants to implement a number of its major projects. This is considered the most cost effective way of managing a varied programme. Greater corporate capacity is being developed through the Shareholder Advisory Group (SAG) and the Fit for the Future programme resource.

Sustainability

13.5 Projects in the Capital Programme are progressed in accordance with the Procurement Strategy, Crime and Disorder Strategy, and the Climate Change Strategy.

Legal

13.6 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

14.0 Engagement and Consultation

14.1 No general public consultations have been undertaken in connection with this report. The Capital Programme has been reviewed by Managers, Corporate Leadership Team and Portfolio Holders.

REPORT ENDS

**CAPITAL PROGRAMME SUMMARY
2023/24 - 2027/28**

APPENDIX 1

	APPENDIX & PAGE REFERENCE	PLANNED EXPENDITURE				
		23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
General Fund	Appendix 4	33,866	8,774	6,465	5,574	5,534
Housing Capital Programme	Appendix 3	60,905	44,221	19,887	18,173	5,534
Total Capital Programme		94,771	52,995	26,352	23,747	11,068

**CAPITAL PROGRAMME SUMMARY
2023/24 - 2027/28**

APPENDIX 2

	FINANCING SUMMARY																TOTAL
	CHARGE TO GEN. FUND (Revenue) £'000	BORROWING			REGIONAL BOARD £'000	HOUSING CAPITAL RECEIPTS £'000	GENERAL CAPITAL RECEIPTS £'000	CAPITAL RECEIPTS £'000	RESERVES					COMMUNITY FUND £'000	GRANTS & CONTRIBS £'000	PFI £'000	
		GENERAL FUND £'000	HRA £'000	TO FUND EXTERNAL LOANS £'000					IT RESERVE £'000	HIP RESERVE £'000	GENERAL RESERVE £'000	MAJOR REPAIRS £'000	SECTION 106 £'000				
2023/2024	48	3,200	0	80,050	0	0	0	2,370	0	348	385	3,956	2,694	51	1,669	0	94,771
2024/2025	0	6,848	2,434	24,598	0	0	0	12,728	0	0	0	4,196	482	0	1,709	0	52,995
2025/2026	0	6,415	12,639	264	0	1,450	0	1,450	0	0	0	4,196	50	0	1,338		26,352
2026/2027	0	5,524	12,639	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,196	50	0	1,338		23,747
2027/2028	0	5,484	0	0	3,406	0	0	0	0	0	0	790	50	0	1,338		11,068

**HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME
2023/24 - 2027/28**

APPENDIX 3

DETAILS OF PROJECT	Expenditure £'000					Total	Financing £'000		
	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28		Borrowing	Contribution Grant	Revenue
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000			Other	
Sheerwater Implementation Costs									
<u>Capital Expenditure Funded By WBC Borrowing:</u>									
Sheerwater Regeneration - Loan to TDL (During Construction)	54,878	24,598	264			79,740	79,740	0	0
						0	0	0	0
<u>Project Management/Revenue Expenditure Originally Financed From The Sheerwater Regen Reserve:</u>						0	0	0	0
Sheerwater Regen Staff Costs	232					232	0	0	232
Removal Costs	18	0				18	0	0	18
Equalities Survey	18	0				18	0	0	18
Miscellaneous Costs Including Subsidy to the Doctor's Surgery & 3rd Party Legal Fees	117	0				117	0	0	117
						0	0	0	0
<u>Other Regeneration Expenditure/Additional Housing Purchases:</u>						0	0	0	0
Home Loss and Disturbance Payments	348	0				348	0	0	348
Total	55,611	24,598	264	0	0	80,473	79,740	0	733
Renovation & Improvements									
Woking Borough Council Homes									
<u>Council Homes AMP (Illustrative breakdown)</u>									
Communal Works	953	300	300	300	300	2,153	0	2,153	0
Lifecycle Dwelling Investment	1,204	5,280	5,280	5,280	1,874	18,918	10,218	8,700	0
Disabled Adaptations/Extensions	197	534	534	534	534	2,333	0	2,333	0
Works Arising From Cyclical Inspections	1,068	766	766	766	766	4,132	0	4,132	0
Capitalised Responsive Enhancements	44	304	304	304	304	1,260	0	1,260	0
Energy Reduction Programme	295	0	0	0	0	295	0	295	0
Development Projects	29	0	0	0	0	29	0	29	0
Fees & Consultancy	167	418	418	418	418	1,839	0	1,839	0
Statutory Inspections	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Additional Capital Maintenance; Fire Safety Works, Major Projects, and Contingency		9,233	9,233	9,233		27,699	20,900	6,799	0
Sheerwater Void Refurbishments		1,450	1,450			2,900	0	2,900	0
Sub Total - Woking Borough Council Homes	3,956	18,285	18,285	16,835	4,196	61,557	31,118	30,439	0

**HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME
2023/24 - 2027/28**

APPENDIX 3

DETAILS OF PROJECT	Expenditure £'000						Total	Financing £'000		
	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	Borrowing		Contribution Grant	Revenue	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000			Other		
Private Sector Homes										
Mandatory Grants										
Mandatory Disabled Facilities	1,338	1,338	1,338	1,338	1,338	6,690	0	6,690	0	
Sub Total - Private Sector Homes	1,338	1,338	1,338	1,338	1,338	6,690	0	6,690	0	
Total Renovation & Improvement	5,294	19,623	19,623	18,173	5,534	68,247	31,118	37,129	0	
TOTAL HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME	60,905	44,221	19,887	18,173	5,534	148,720	110,858	37,129	733	

**CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24 - 2027/28
GENERAL FUND PROJECTS**

PROJECT REFERENCE	DETAILS OF PROJECT	Expenditure £'000						Financing £'000		
		23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	Total	Borrowing	Contribution Grant Other	Revenue
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000			
	<u>Group/External Loans and Share Capital</u>									
n/a	Victoria Square Phase 2 - Loan to Victoria Square Woking Ltd	25,172	0	0	0		25,172	25,172		
		25,172	0	0	0	0	25,172	25,172	0	0
	<u>Woking Borough Council</u>									
	Place									
n/a	Purchase of Winston Lodge (funded by borrowing)	512					512	512	0	0
20357	Local Development Framework and Local Plan (funded by revenue)	30	0				30	0	0	30
20343	Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG) Maintenance (S106 funded)	154	140	50	50	50	444	0	444	0
20226	HIF Victoria Arch and Integrated South Side Works (funded from grant \ CIL \ Interim Borrowing)	110	0				110	110	0	0
20229	Car Park Management System (funded by borrowing)	350					350	350	0	0
20280	Decarbonisation for Export House and Midas House (funded by Grant/Service Charges)	278					278	278	0	0
n/a	St Johns Lye Road Repairs (funded by revenue)	15					15	0	0	15
20327	Westfield Avenue Compound - Residential Planning Application (Funded by borrowing)	42					42	42	0	0
20319	Egley Road Development (Funded by Borrowing)	128					128	0	128	0
	Road Safety Audit works to complete the WITP project (funded by Borrowing)	50	258				308	308	0	0
20233	Play Area Works (Funded by UKSPF Grant\Borrowing)	148	180				328	153	175	0
10206	Parks and Other Green Space Works (UKSPG Grant Funded)		140				140	0	140	0
	Communities									
TMP15	Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme combined with Ukraine Refugee Programme (funded by grant)	331	0	0	0		331	0	331	0
n/a	Eastwood Leisure Centre (funded by borrowing)		0	100			100	100	0	0
20264	Old Woking Community Centre Project (Woking College) (funded from grant/contribution)	2,540	270				2,810	0	2,810	0
20000	Sheerwater Social Support (funded by revenue)	3	0	0	0		3	0	0	3
20324	West Byfleet Recreation Ground Tennis courts (Grant Funded/Neighbourhood CIL)		128				128	0	128	0
20328	Pool in the Park Urgent and Essential Works (Funded by Borrowing)		1,164	1,000	372	57	2,593	2,593	0	0
N/A	Community Fund Committed Grant Awards (Linkable and New Life Church) (funded by Reserve\Revenue)	51					51	0	0	51
	Corporate Resources									
20321	Asset Management Plan (funded by borrowing)	1,000	3,836	4,000	4,628	4,943	18,407	18,407	0	0
Various	IT Programme (funded by borrowing)	435	1,510	1,240	449	409	4,043	4,043	0	0
20122	CCTV Infrastructure Upgrade and Formation of Town Centre Control Room (funded by borrowing/grant)	200					200	200	0	0
TMP23	Capitalised salary costs for projects (funded by borrowing)	75	75	75	75	75	375	375	0	0
20300	Improvement and Recovery Programme (formerly Fit for the Future External Support) (funded by capital receipts)	2,242	1,073				3,315	0	3,315	0
		8,694	8,774	6,465	5,574	5,534	35,041	27,471	7,471	99
	Total	33,866	8,774	6,465	5,574	5,534	60,213	52,643	7,471	99

**CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24 - 2027/28
GENERAL FUND IT PROJECTS**

APPENDIX 4a

DETAILS OF PROJECT	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
IT Programme					
VMWare	25	25	25	30	30
Resilient Wifi	15	15	15	17	17
Pay 360 move to cloud	80	80	0	0	0
Finance application upgrade	0	150	150	0	0
Housing management and repairs upgrade	0	270	0	0	0
SAN / Server Replacement	0	110	500	50	50
WAN and Internet	0	70	70	70	80
Cyber security backup	0	15	15	17	17
Customer Services Rvs and Bens Case Management System (Civica)	0	50	50	50	0
Customer Relationship Management	0	150	100	0	0
Telephony and contact centre	40	100	50	0	0
Web publishing and Forms	0	200	100	50	50
SIEM (Security Information & Event Management) Implementation	20	10	0	0	0
SOC (Security Operations Centre) Implementation	20	10	0	0	0
PSN Replacement	20	0	0	0	0
Palo Alto Firewall Replacement	15	15	15	15	15
Exchange Hybrid Migration to Exchange Online	10	0	0	0	0
OneXafe Backup Solution	40	0	0	0	0
General Replacement	50	50	50	50	50
Alternative Premises Plan	0	90	0	0	0
Contingency	100	100	100	100	100
Total	435	1,510	1,240	449	409

Page 1 of 7

CAPITAL PROGRAMME - GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CAPITAL PROGRAMME	A plan of the capital and one-off investment required to deliver the Council's key strategies and objectives. Projects/schemes will proceed only if resources permit.
CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	Expenditure that has a benefit exceeding a year (as opposed to revenue expenditure where the benefit is used up in the year).
FUNDS	Money resources needed to finance the Capital Programme. Funds will only be released to enable a project to proceed once the Chief Finance Officer is satisfied that the project is affordable and the resources are available.
REVENUE IMPLICATIONS	The ongoing costs such as maintenance and loan charges arising from capital investment.
HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME	Planned spending on housing projects .
GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME	All other projects.
CURRENT AND COMMITTED SCHEMES	Schemes which are currently underway, for which funds have been released or for which it is imperative that they proceed to achieve key objectives.
NEW PROPOSALS	Schemes for which resources have not been released and, probably, have yet to be fully scoped.
RESERVES	Money set aside to cover expenditure in the future (excluding provisions for future liabilities or losses).
IT IP RESERVE	Money set aside specifically for Information Technology schemes.
HCP RESERVE	Money set aside specifically for Housing Capital Programme schemes.
CAPITAL STRATEGY RESERVE	Money set aside for schemes not covered by other reserves, mainly General Fund Capital Programme schemes.
MAJOR REPAIRS RESERVE	Money set aside mainly from the Major Repairs Allowance paid annually by the Government to finance work on Council houses.
SECTION 106	Contributions received from developers as part of the Town Planning process to finance projects in the community.
BORROWING	Borrowing money from external sources in accordance approved borrowing limits and tests of affordability.
HOUSING CAPITAL RECEIPTS	Proceeds from the sale of housing assets, such as sales under Right to Buy.

APPENDIX 5

GF CAPITAL RECEIPTS	Proceeds from the sale of assets other than Housing assets. No pooling is required.
GF REVENUE	Funding provided by the General Fund budget to finance one off revenue type Investment Programme projects.
COMM FUND	Community Fund – money set aside to provide financial assistance to local organisations for the provision of new or improved facilities for the benefit of the community.
GROUP COMPANY	Funding by Group Company.
PFI	Private Finance Initiative – a Government programme to bring private investment into social housing by allowing local authorities to work with a partnership of specialist organisations to build new homes or improve properties already owned by the Council.
OTHER	Funding from National Lottery, Government departments and other organisations.

EXECUTIVE – 1 FEBRUARY 2024

FUTURE OF BROCKHILL

Executive Summary

At its meeting of 14 December 2023, the Executive agreed to commence consultation with residents, their families and other stakeholders on the proposed closure of Brockhill extra care housing scheme. Brockhill requires significant capital expenditure on fire safety remedial works and a full heating system replacement. The anticipated total capital expenditure required on Brockhill over the next 10 years is forecast to be circa £5.8 million. In addition, whilst Brockhill is a much valued and loved facility by residents, the design and layout of the building does not meet the current expectations for extra care housing as set out in Surrey County Council's Accommodation with Care and Support Strategy and national best practice. This level of capital investment is considered unviable for a building of this age and size.

This report provides an update on the results of the consultation and seeks approval to progress with the proposed closure.

The Council understands that this will be a difficult and upsetting time for people living and working at Brockhill, as well as their families. The Council is fully committed to supporting residents with identifying and moving to alternative accommodation based on their individual assessed needs and their preferences. This will continue to be done in close partnership with colleagues in Surrey County Council (SCC) Adult Social Care. The Council has already commissioned additional advocacy support (Citizens Advice Woking) and mental health support (Catalyst) to assist residents through this difficult period of change.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

- (i) the closure of Brockhill Extra Care Housing be agreed;**
- (ii) the residents of Brockhill be offered suitable alternative accommodation which best meets their needs and preferences and be paid Statutory Home Loss and Disturbance payments, where eligible; and**
- (iii) authority be delegated to the Strategic Director - Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to make any further decisions required in respect of the closure.**

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To set out the future plans for Brockhill Extra Care Housing scheme and the support that will be available to impacted residents.

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

Background Papers: None.

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Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ellen Nicholson
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Councillor Ian Johnson
Email: cllrian.johnson@woking.gov.uk

Date Published: 24 January 2024

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Brockhill Extra Care Housing is a purpose-built two-storey scheme, constructed during the late 1980s. The scheme provides 48 extra care apartments over 2 floors, along with a communal lounge, dining room, kitchen and reception/staff/office areas. The Council provides a dedicated support team at Brockhill, whilst Surrey County Council commissions a care provider to provide individual care packages to residents who need it. The scheme is very popular with older residents in the Borough for its homely setting and operates with a waiting list.
- 1.2 Brockhill requires significant capital expenditure over the next 10 years which is forecast to be circa £5.8 million. This level of capital investment is considered unviable for a building of this age and size.
- 1.3 At its meeting of 14 December 2023, the Executive agreed to commence consultation with residents, their families and other stakeholders on the proposed closure of Brockhill.
- 1.4 This report provides an update on the results of the consultation and seeks approval to progress with the proposed closure.

2.0 Building Issues

- 2.1 Over the years, the structure of the building at Brockhill appears to have had limited investment with only some minor internal works undertaken. As a result of its age and lack of ongoing investment, the building needs major capital works over the next 2 years and beyond.
- 2.2 The communal boiler serving the scheme failed last December causing considerable inconvenience and discomfort to residents and staff. The communal boiler was found to be beyond repair. Furthermore, the heating infrastructure throughout the building is aged and in poor condition and the whole heating system requires upgrading and renewing. The scheme is currently being served by a temporary boiler, which is not a long-term solution.
- 2.3 In February 2023, the Council received an updated Fire Risk Assessment for the building that identified that significant improvements were needed, including replacing fire doors and frames and compartmentation works. The combination of the building defects and the vulnerability of the residents means there are high risks around the fire safety of the scheme. In order to mitigate these risks, the Council has implemented a number of interim measures, including introducing a Waking Watch, switching from a Stay Put to an Evacuation Policy, freezing new lettings and upgrading the fire detection system. Where possible, the Council has sought to relocate residents from the first floor to the ground floor to aid evacuation. Since December 2023, a team of evacuation officers has also been introduced to assist less mobile residents in the event of a fire occurring.
- 2.4 The combined cost of upgrading the heating system and fire safety remedial works is circa £2.75 million over the next year. The building is expected to require other planned works over the next 5 years, forecast at a further cost of circa £600,000.
- 2.5 Many other building elements are original and are deteriorating in accordance with their anticipated lifecycle expectancy. Over the next 5 -10 years, building components, such as, rainwater fittings, roofing, external joinery, paths/hardstanding, common electrical elements, and floor coverings, are expected to need investment. The anticipated total capital expenditure required on Brockhill over the next 10 years is forecast to be circa £5.8 million, including design and professional fees, inflation, preliminaries and contingency.
- 2.6 In July 2019, Surrey County Council (SCC) approved an Accommodation with Care and Support Strategy and committed to a major programme within the strategy to deliver 725 units of affordable Extra Care Housing for older people by 2030. Any decision around Brockhill will have implications for the delivery of this strategy, along with potentially placing additional cost

pressures on adult social care budgets. Accordingly, the Council initiated discussions with officers at SCC during the summer of 2023 regarding the future of Brockhill, which included a site inspection.

- 2.7 The engagement with SCC officers has been productive and positive, including validating the extent of the capital works required at Brockhill. In addition, whilst Brockhill is a much valued and loved facility by residents, the discussions concluded that the design and layout of the building does not meet the current expectations for extra care housing as set out in SCC's strategy and national best practice.
- 2.8 Sadly, all discussions and investigations point to the conclusion that the building is becoming obsolete with the level of capital investment required over the next 10 years being unviable (in the context of the age and size of the scheme).

3.0 Consultation

- 3.1 Under Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985 the Council has a legal obligation to consult its secure tenants on 'matters of housing management' such as changes to the management, maintenance, improvement or demolition of houses let by them, or changes in the provision of amenities.
- 3.2 A consultation with residents ran from 20 December 2023 to 22 January 2024. Residents were assisted by Brockhill staff to complete the consultation survey, along with advocacy support commissioned from Citizens Advice Woking (CAW). The survey sought views on the proposed closure and its impact on residents, along with seeking input on the type of accommodation and support residents would need with moving to a new home.
- 3.3 The Council received a total of 19 responses to the survey, representing 76% of the remaining residents living at Brockhill.
- 3.4 Respondents were asked to provide comments on the proposed closure of Brockhill. Generally, residents expressed their shock and upset at the news of the proposed closure. Some expressed their frustration that the building had not been maintained better over the years. However, some residents felt the proposed closure had opened up alternatives for them, such as, moving closer to relatives.
- 3.5 74% of respondents felt the proposed closure would impact them negatively. All respondents identified some downsides with a potential move, particularly the disruption, not wanting to move away from Goldsworth Park and being separated from friends at Brockhill.
- 3.6 However, 42% of respondents identified potential benefits to the proposed closure, particularly moving closer to family and wanting more modern facilities. Two residents felt they needed more care than Brockhill could offer them.
- 3.7 The majority of respondents would like to move to other extra care housing schemes in the Borough (i.e. Hale End Court). However, respondents were aware of the lack of available spaces. There was also interest in moving to residential care homes, extra care housing schemes in other areas and sheltered housing from some respondents.
- 3.8 All respondents indicated that they would need support to move, with packing and unpacking; removals and post redirection being the mostly frequently selected support needs.

4.0 Future of Brockhill

- 4.1 Determining a way forward for Brockhill is a sensitive issue. The Council has sought to be open and transparent and acknowledge that this a complex issue, which doesn't necessarily have an ideal solution. However, given the ongoing fire safety concerns, the future of Brockhill does need to be resolved swiftly and the residents provided with a clear direction.
- 4.2 Whilst the Council acknowledges that the majority of residents feel the closure of Brockhill will negatively impact them, regrettably the level of capital investment required remains unviable for a building of this age and size. As such, this report recommends that the proposed closure of Brockhill goes ahead.
- 4.3 The Council understands that this will be a difficult and upsetting time for people living and working in Brockhill, as well as their families. The Council is fully committed to supporting residents with identifying and moving to alternative accommodation based on their individual assessed needs and their preferences. This will continue to be done in close dialogue with colleagues in Surrey County Council (SCC) Adult Social Care. The Council has already commissioned additional advocacy support (Citizens Advice Woking) and mental health support (Catalyst) to assist residents through this difficult period of change.
- 4.4 A number of residents have already been assisted to move with only 50% of flats at Brockhill still being occupied (compared to 67% in December 2023). Given the low occupancy and speed by which residents are moving out, it is considered in the best interests of the remaining residents that the Council aims to progress the rehousing process swiftly. Experience elsewhere highlights how quickly sheltered housing schemes can become lonely and isolating places for the last remaining residents as occupancy reduces.
- 4.5 As a Council Tenant, residents moving from Brockhill will be entitled to a Statutory Home Loss Payment, which is currently set by the Government at £8,100. In addition, the Council will reimburse reasonable disturbance costs incurred in moving. Given the age and vulnerabilities of residents, the Council will seek to arrange (on behalf of tenants) items, such as, packing and unpacking and removals to avoid cost and inconvenience.
- 4.6 The Council intends to continue to work collaboratively with residents, their families and advocates to agree a suitable move and to support them with settling into their new home. However, where this is not possible, the Council reserves the right to seek possession through the legal process as a last resort.
- 4.7 Officers have been focused on supporting the residents through this difficult period and no decision is being sought on the long-term future of the Brockhill site. Should Council agree to progress the closure, work will need to commence on a decommissioning strategy to ensure the building is secured upon vacant possession. A decision on the future of Brockhill will be brought back to a future meeting when options have been explored.

5.0 Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 The Council's Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026 includes the following priorities "to provide well-designed, high quality homes that are affordable and meet local needs", "to help people to achieve independence and wellbeing" and "to deliver an improved housing service to our tenants and leaseholders".
- 5.2 Whilst Brockhill is a much valued and loved facility by residents, its design and layout does not meet the current expectations for extra care housing and does not meet latest fire safety standards. The Council invested in a new build Extra Care Housing Scheme at Hale End Court, which opened in 2021, which better meets the Council's strategic objectives for housing.

6.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 6.1 The proposal in this report to close Brockhill will have financial implications through the home loss and disturbance payments which will need to be made. This is estimated at around £350,000.
- 6.2 If fully occupied, Brockhill would have been projected to have brought in approximately £540,000 of rent and service charges during 2023/24, inclusive of all energy costs. The operating costs for running Brockhill are high due to the on-site support team (approximately £179,000), high energy consumption (approximately £207,000) and significant areas of communal spaces that have to be maintained. In addition, all Brockhill residents receive wider housing services offered to Council tenants and covered by rents (for example, repairs service, rent collection, etc.). Although attempts have been made in recent years to increase charges and reduce costs, the income from Brockhill generates little (if any) surplus upon which to contribute to capital investment.
- 6.3 The proposed closure removes the necessity for the Council to undertake a significant amount of capital work over the next 2 years to improve fire safety and upgrade the heating system, along with longer-term works that will be required. The anticipated total capital expenditure required on Brockhill over the next 10 years if it were to stay open is forecast to be circa £5.8 million, including design and professional fees, inflation, preliminaries and contingency.
- 6.4 The building will remain part of the Council's housing assets and further consideration will be given to the future of the site in due course.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 6.5 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken on the proposed closure of Brockhill.
- 6.6 Based on the resident profile, the proposed closure will most significantly impact women (83%), older people (75% are aged 70 or more) and those with disabilities. The impact of these proposals will be managed and mitigated through comprehensive support and assistance with those affected by the change. This includes working in close partnership with occupational therapists, Adult Social Care, Catalyst and Citizens Advice Woking. The specific needs of each individual will be considered and addressed on a case-by-case basis.
- 6.7 The proposed closure may potentially impact up to 3 members of staff working at Brockhill. The Council will attempt to identify alternative employment opportunities for affected staff following the full closure in line with the Council's Organisational Change policy.

Legal

- 6.8 The Council has complied with the consultation requirements in s105 of the Housing Act 1985 as already set out in section 3 of this report.
- 6.9 The residents of Brockhill benefit from secure tenancies. In order to rehouse them, the Council has to provide suitable alternative accommodation as provided for at Ground 10, Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (1985 Act). For accommodation to be suitable alternative accommodation for the purposes of s.84(2) of the 1985 Act, it must be "reasonably suitable to the needs of the tenant and his family".

7.0 Engagement and Consultation

7.1 A resident consultation on the proposed closure of Brockhill ran from 20 December 2023 to 22 January 2024. The Council received a total of 19 responses to the survey, representing 76% of the remaining residents living at Brockhill. The results are summarised in Section 3 of the report.

7.2 In response to the consultation feedback, this report sets out proposals to:

- Continue to work with residents, their families and carers, to plan moves to new homes that meet residents needs and wishes.
- Ensure that affected residents receive the best care and support with moving to suitable alternative accommodation.

REPORT ENDS

COUNCIL – 8 FEBRUARY 2024

APPOINTMENT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR FINANCE AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

Executive Summary

Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires that the Council appoints a Chief Finance Officer (Strategic Director for Finance). The Chief Finance Officer has a number of statutory duties and responsibilities relating to the proper administration of the Council's finances.

Recommendations

The Council is requested to:

RESOLVE whether to appoint the shortlisted candidate to the position of Strategic Director for Finance, Section 151 Officer.

The Council has the authority to determine the recommendation set out above.

Background Papers:	None.
Reporting Person:	Julie Fisher, Chief Executive Email: julie.fisher@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3333
Contact Person:	Rachel Basham, Strategic Lead – Improvement and Recovery Email: rachel.basham@woking.gov.uk
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Ann-Marie Barker Email: cllrann-marie.barker@woking.gov.uk
Date Published:	31 January 2024

Appointment of Strategic Director for Finance and Section 151 Officer

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires that the Council appoints a Chief Finance Officer (Strategic Director for Finance). The Chief Finance Officer has a number of statutory duties and responsibilities relating to the proper administration of the Council's finances. The job description for this role can be found at appendix 1.

2.0 Recruitment Process

- 2.1 GatenbySanderson were selected to lead the recruitment process on behalf of Woking Borough Council. The recruitment process has included an extensive search, application process, technical interviews, and a stakeholder interview day. A briefing to Members on the recruitment process was held on 23 January 2024. The slides from this session are included at appendix 2.
- 2.2 Following the process detailed above, one candidate was put forward for interview by the Panel.

3.0 Member Appointments Panel

- 3.1 The appointment of all statutory and non-statutory Chief Officers takes place at Council. Delegated responsibility for the interview of candidate(s) for such positions is delegated to the cross-party Member Appointments Panel. Following the interview process, the Member Appointments Panel will make a recommendation to Council. This will either recommend that a candidate is appointed or that the Council should not proceed with an appointment at this time, including reasons for this decision.
- 3.2 The Member Appointments Panel for this position will take place on Friday, 2 February 2024. Following this meeting, a supplementary report will be issued to Council detailing the recommendation of the Panel.

4.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 4.1 It is a statutory requirement of the Council to appoint a S151 Officer (Local Government Act 1972).

Equalities and Human Resources

- 4.2 The recruitment process has been undertaken in line with equalities best practice.

Legal

- 4.3 As per 4.1.

REPORT ENDS

**WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL
JOB PROFILE****Job Description**

Job Title: Strategic Director for Finance & Section 151 Officer

Pay Grade: W11

Directorate: Corporate Services

Team: Finance

Reporting to: Chief Executive

Job Purpose:

Reporting to the Chief Executive, as a member of the Corporate Leadership Team, this role acts as the Council's statutory Chief Financial Officer and Section 151 Officer.

The role will be integral to the Council responding to Government intervention and the issuing of a Section 114 Notice in May 2023. As part of this programme, they will lead on the Financial Recovery theme of the Council's Improvement and Recovery Plan. This theme aims to ensure sustainable budget management, making difficult decisions whilst delivering against council strategic priorities and safeguarding future capacity.

Alongside this strategic improvement role, this role also fulfils the statutory role of the Council's Chief Finance Officer (s151) as defined by the CIPFA publication on the role of the Chief Finance Officer. It will be responsible for leading the Finance Team and ensuring effective arrangements are in place to meet legislative and statutory requirements in relation to financial management, reporting and internal control.

Main Tasks:

1. To undertake the responsibilities of the Council's Chief Finance Officer.
2. As a member of the Council's Corporate Leadership Team, contribute to the effective design and subsequent delivery of the Council's key priorities as specified in the Improvement and Recovery Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy
3. Contribute to and support corporate governance across all of the Council's activities.
4. Professional responsibility for the Council Tax and Business Rates functions currently reporting to the Head of Digital during a customer services transformation programme.

WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL JOB PROFILE

5. Leadership of the Financial Management team providing and budgetary and accounting support required for the Council's business and all accounts payable and receiveable.
6. Developing and overseeing the delivery of the Annual Internal Audit Plan
7. Ensuring that the Council has effective policies and strategies that deliver the Council's priorities and long term financial sustainability.
8. Ensuring the Council fulfils its lawful obligations, statutory duties, and performs its functions and activities in accordance with the law and the principles of good financial governance.
9. Build and maintain effective working relationships with Elected Members to assist in strategic decision-making and policy making.
10. Plan and control the production of relevant, accurate and timely financial performance and management accounting information for Members, Strategic Director and budget managers.
11. Plan and control the production of financial planning information and forecasts for each Business Area and for corporate consolidation.
12. Lead the management and development of the Finance team, ensuring that they have the right knowledge and skills to support the Council's financial improvement journey.
13. Ensure the delivery of the agreed business area through performance management of the team and individuals.
14. To undertake other duties which may arise or as may be delegated from time to time, commensurate with the skills required for this post.

WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL JOB PROFILE

Person Specification

Key:

E = Essential, D = Desirable,

A = Application Form, I = Interview, P = Presentation

Please list as required.

Criteria	Standard	E/D	Measure
Education & training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCAB recognised accounting qualification 	E	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educated to degree level or equivalent 	E	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of post qualification personal and professional continued development 	E	A
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive post qualification experience at a senior level within an accountancy and audit environment 	E	I/P
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of providing strategic direction and strong leadership in a previous senior finance or management role 	E	I/P
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of providing strategic advice, information and support to members and external parties. 	E	I/P
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive experience of successful strategic financial management, financial planning and budget preparation. 	E	I/P
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proven ability to implement and monitor highly effective and efficient financial controls 	E	I/P
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of leading a team to prepare and present accurate and timely financial statements and comprehensive commentary in accordance with relevant regulations/ Guidelines 	E	I/P
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive experience of report writing and presenting at Corporate Team and Council level 	E	I/P
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A thorough knowledge of the efficiency agenda, business improvement techniques and performance management – with the ability to apply these to the development of staff and systems. 	E	I/P
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authoritative and influential with good relationship management and networking skills. 	E	I/P
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political awareness with the ability to make progress in complex policy areas. 	E	I/P

**WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL
JOB PROFILE**

Special Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have day-to-day responsibility for the Financial Management function.	E	I/P
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide strategic financial advice to Member with Portfolio for Finance and senior management.	E	I/P

WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL JOB PROFILE

Candidate Screening

Does Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 apply?	No
Disclosure and Barring Service check required?	Yes
If yes, what level?	Basic
Is this a Politically Restricted Post?	Yes
Does this role have emergency responsibilities?	Yes Bronze (Incident Liaison Officer)

Role Map

Behaviour	Level Required (1-4)
Shaping our Future	4
Leading our People	4
Delivering for our Customers	4
Making Change Happen	4
Team and Partnership Working	4
Communicating Openly	4
Performance Management	4

Please refer to the Council's Behavioural Framework for examples and indicators of the expected behaviour required at each level (this will be attached as a document to each job advert).

Section 151 Recruitment

23 January 2023

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Objective of today's session

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To provide Members with assurance that the recruitment process for the Director for Finance and Section 151 Officer is robust and in line with legislation.

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Legislative Requirements & Governance Process

Julie Fisher -
CEX

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Who makes the decision?

Where executive arrangements are in place, the appointment of staff is a function reserved to the Council. This means that these decisions are either taken by the Council itself, a Committee or an officer.

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Local Government Act, 1972

All appointments and dismissals that **are not** chief officers or deputy chief officers is the responsibility of the **head of paid service (the chief executive)**. Members are not permitted to be involved in these decisions,

The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001

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Statutory Chief Officers

Members **ARE** involved in the appointment of Statutory Chief Officers. These are:

- Head of Paid Service (LGHA 1989)
- Monitoring Officer (LGHA 1989)
- Chief Finance Officer (LGA 1972)

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Not applicable for Woking Borough Council but for reference:

- Director of Children's Services (Children Act 2004)
- Director of Public Health (National Health Service Act 2006)
- Director of Adult Social Services (Local Authority Social Services Act 1970)

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Non-Statutory Chief Officers

Members ARE involved in the appointment of non-statutory chief officers. A 'non-statutory chief officer' is defined as:

- a person for whom the head of the authority's paid service is directly responsible
- a person who, as respects all or most of the duties of their post, is required to report directly or is directly accountable to the head of the authority's paid service; and
- **excludes** any person whose duties are solely **secretarial** or **clerical** or are otherwise in the nature of **support services**.

Local Government and Housing Act 1989

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How this works in practice

- Not practical (or desirable!) for interviews of Chief Officers to be undertaken by Full Council.

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Usual practice is for appointment of Chief Officers to be led by a cross-party Member Appointments Panel, with Council endorsing the appointment based upon their recommendation.

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Woking's Member Appointment Panel

The Member Appointment Panel is agreed at the Council's Annual General Meeting. It is chaired by the Leader of the Council.

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Appointments Panel

Councillor Tahir Aziz
Councillor Ann-Marie Barker
Councillor Kevin Davis

Councillor Will Forster
Councillor Dale Roberts

The Member Appointment Panel for the S151 Officer will take place on Friday 2 Feb 2024. A report will be issued following the meeting to Council, with a recommendation from the panel.

The Recruitment Process Frazer Thouard – GatenbySanderson

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About our business

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Established in
2002

Dedicated
service to the
Public & Not
for Profit
sector

Size and scale

Regularly
deliver high-
profile &
sensitive
appointments

Extensive due
diligence

High levels of
customer
service

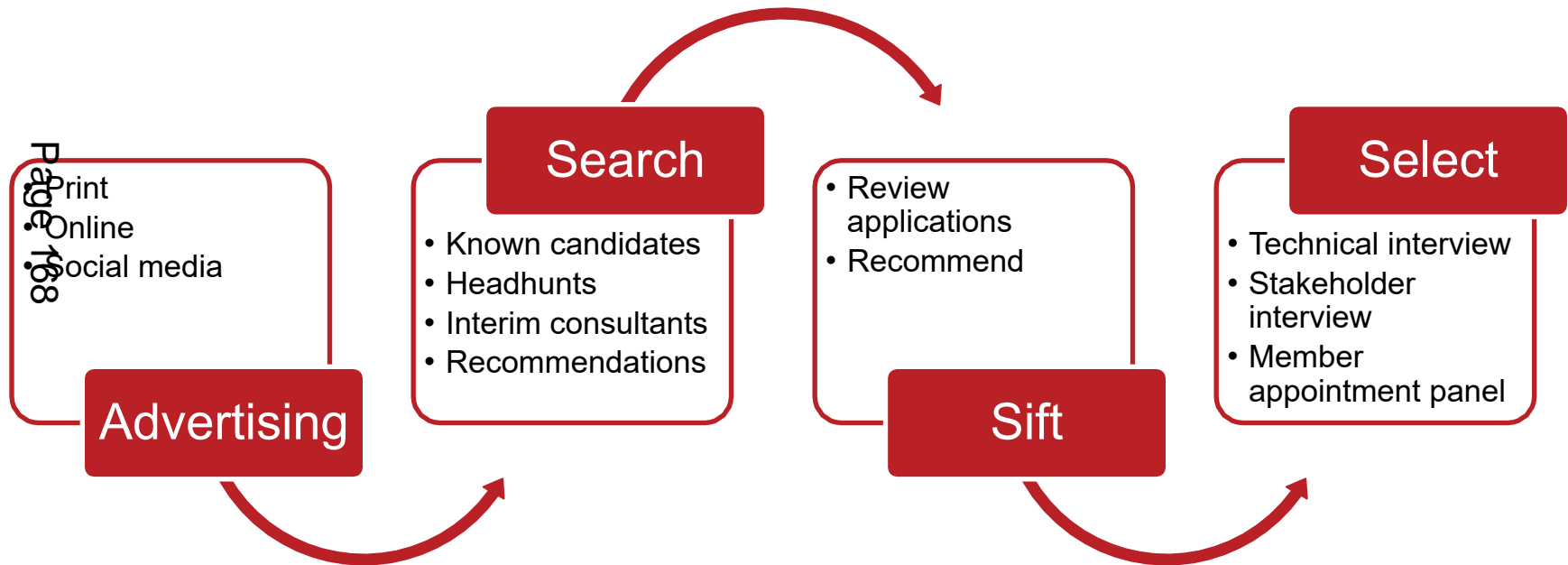
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Context to the recruitment

- 5-months following the issuing of a S114 notice
- Commissioners appointed for a five year period
- Chief Executive announced departure
- Second Commissioners report announced
- New lead commissioner appointed
- New Managing Director appointed
- Ongoing financial challenges within the sector
- 2024 General Election

The recruitment process



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Your recommendation will have been:

- Technically interviewed by your S151 Officer
- Interviewed by Julie Fisher & Carol Culley
- Met by Cllr Barker & Cllr Roberts
- Met by the Strategic Directors
- Met by the Finance team
- Interviewed formally by Appointment Panel
- Background checked:
 - References
 - Social media
 - Adverse media
 - Barred Directors

COUNCIL – 8 FEBRUARY 2024

APPOINTMENT OF RETURNING OFFICER

Executive Summary

The Council is required to appoint a Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer, roles normally held by the Chief Executive or a member of the Corporate Leadership Team.

In light of the recent resignation of the Chief Executive, Julie Fisher, who currently holds the positions, it is proposed that the Director of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer, Gareth John, takes on the roles.

Recommendations

The Council is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) Gareth John be appointed Electoral Registration Officer under Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 with effect from 9 February 2024; and
- (ii) Gareth John be appointed Returning Officer for local government elections under Section 35 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 with effect from 9 February 2024.

The Council has the authority to determine the recommendations set out above.

Background Papers:	None.
Reporting Person:	Julie Fisher, Chief Executive Email: julie.fisher@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3333
Contact Person:	Frank Jeffrey, Head of Democratic Services Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3012
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Ann-Marie Barker Email: cllrann-marie.barker@woking.gov.uk
Date Published:	31 January 2024

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report recommends that, with effect from 9 February 2024, the Director of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer, Gareth John, should be appointed as (i) Electoral Registration Officer and (ii) Returning Officer for local government elections.

2.0 Electoral Arrangements

- 2.1 Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 provides for the Council to appoint an Electoral Registration Officer. Section 35 provides for the appointment of a Returning Officer for local government elections. These roles have been undertaken by the existing Chief Executive (Julie Fisher) who has previously announced that she will be stepping down. It is now recommended that these roles transfer to Gareth John, who has previously acted as Deputy Returning Officer for the Authority.
- 2.2 In view of the need to publish election documents under the title of Returning Officer in the coming weeks in preparation for the 2024 elections, including poll cards, it is proposed that Gareth takes up the roles from 9 February 2024.
- 2.3 In considering these proposals, it should be noted that Richard Carr, recently appointed as Managing Director Commissioner of Woking Borough Council by the Secretary of State, has been consulted and supports the appointment of Gareth. Richard Carr will take up his post in April 2024.

3.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 3.1 There are no financial or risk implications arising from these proposals.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 3.2 There are no equalities or human resources implications arising from this report.

Legal

- 3.3 The Council is required by statute to appoint a Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer.

4.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 4.1 Julie Fisher, Richard Carr and Gareth John have been consulted on the proposals and no concerns have been raised.

REPORT ENDS

COUNCIL – 8 FEBRUARY 2024

AMENDMENT TO CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

Executive Summary

Council is invited to agree an amendment to the 2024/25 Calendar of meetings which has been proposed as part of an overall review of the Council's Committee arrangements, the full outcomes of which will be reported to Council in March 2024.

In view of the need to make suitable arrangements in advance of the meeting of Council in March, Councillors are asked to agree now that the meeting of Council scheduled for 16 May 2024, at which the Mayor and Deputy Mayor would traditionally be appointed, is cancelled and that the items of business are transferred to the first business meeting of Council at which the appointment of Committees is confirmed. In doing so, the meeting of Council on 20 May 2024 formally becomes the 'Annual Meeting'.

The meeting on 20 May 2024 would, amongst other matters, be responsible for:

- The election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor
- Presentation of the Young People's Civic Award
- Announcement of the Eminent Citizen
- Appointment of Members to Committees, Working Groups etc.
- Local Election Results and Political Balance of the Council
- Constitution of Committees, Working Groups and Ad hoc Bodies.

With the exception of Guildford Borough Council, all Surrey Borough and District Authorities choose to elect their Chairs/Mayors at the same meeting of Council that the appointments to Committees are made. The proposal will have a cost saving for the Council and, if agreed, the arrangement would be continued in future years.

No change to the Council's Constitution would be necessary to effect this change.

Recommendations

The Council is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) the Calendar of meetings for 2024/25 be amended with the removal of the Council meeting on 16 May 2024, with the items of business to be taken at the meeting on 20 May 2024; and
- (ii) the change be incorporated in subsequent calendars of meetings.

The Council has the authority to determine the recommendations set out above.

Amendment to Calendar of Meetings

Background Papers: None.

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

Contact Person: Frank Jeffrey, Head of Democratic Services
Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3012

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

Date Published: 31 January 2024

REPORT ENDS