

Public Document Pack



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

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Executive to be held on Thursday, 16 July 2020 at 7.00 pm. The meeting will be held virtually and webcast live through the Council's website in accordance with the Coronavirus Act 2020 and The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (S.I.2020 No. 392).

Please note the meeting will be filmed and will be broadcast live and subsequently as an archive on the Council's website (www.woking.gov.uk). The images and sound recording will also be used for training purposes within the Council. By joining the meeting remotely, you are consenting to being filmed.

The agenda for the meeting is set out below.

RAY MORGAN
Chief Executive

AGENDA

PART I - PRESS AND PUBLIC PRESENT

1. Minutes

To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 22 June 2020 as published.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Urgent Business

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

4. Declarations of Interest (Pages 5 - 8)

- (i) To receive declarations of interest from Members and Officers in respect of any item to be considered at the meeting.
- (ii) In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor D J Bittleston declares a non-pecuniary interest in any items concerning the companies of which he is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that speaking and voting are permissible.

- (iii) In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor A Azad declares a non-pecuniary interest in any items concerning the companies of which she is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that speaking and voting are permissible.
- (iv) In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor C S Kemp declares a non-pecuniary interest in any items concerning the companies of which he is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that speaking and voting are permissible.
- (v) In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor D Harlow declares a non-pecuniary interest in any items concerning the companies of which she is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that speaking and voting are permissible.
- (vi) In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor G S Cundy declares a non-pecuniary interest in any items concerning the companies of which he is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that speaking and voting are permissible.
- (vii) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Ray Morgan, 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 Morgan may advise the Executive on those items.
- (viii) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Deputy Chief Executive, Douglas Spinks, 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 Spinks may advise the Executive on those items.
- (ix) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, Peter Bryant, 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 Bryant may advise the Executive on those items.
- (x) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Finance, Leigh Clarke, declares a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which she is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that Mrs Clarke may advise the Executive on those items.
- (xi) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Housing, Louise Strongitharm, declares a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which she is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that Mrs Strongitharm may advise the Executive on those items.
- (xii) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Community Services, Julie Fisher, declares a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning the companies of which she is a Council-appointed director. The companies are listed in the attached schedule. The interests are such that Mrs Fisher may advise the Executive on those items.
- (xiii) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Finance, Leigh Clarke, declares a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning Woking Football Club and/or the GolDev Woking Limited development. The interest arises from (i) her husband having a small shareholding in Woking Football Club and (ii) being a Council-appointed director of Kingfield Community Sports Centre Limited. The interest is such that Mrs Clarke may advise the Executive on

those items.

- (xiv) In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, Peter Bryant, declares a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items concerning Woking Football Club and/or the GolDev Woking Limited development. The interest arises from (i) him being a member of the Cards Trust (the supporters' club for Woking Football Club), (ii) providing occasional unpaid assistance to Woking Football Club, e.g. acting as returning officer at the election of directors and (iii) being a Council-appointed director of Kingfield Community Sports Centre Limited. The interest is such that Mr Bryant may advise the Executive on those items.

Questions

5. To deal with any written questions submitted under Section 3 of the Executive Procedure Rules. Copies of the questions and draft replies will be available electronically at the meeting.

Matters for Recommendation

6. Woking Community Safety Anti Social Behaviour Policy EXE20-045 (Pages 9 - 18)
Reporting Person – Ray Morgan
7. Independent Directors of Subsidiaries EXE20-037 (Pages 19 - 20)
Reporting Person – Ray Morgan

Matters for Determination

8. Local Government Association Peer Challenge EXE20-047 (Pages 21 - 42)
Reporting Person – Ray Morgan
9. Framework for Recovery EXE20-049 (Pages 43 - 76)
Reporting Person – Douglas Spinks
10. The Business and Planning Bill EXE20-048 (Pages 77 - 82)
Reporting Person – Peter Bryant
11. Equalities Annual Report - 2020 EXE20-026 (Pages 83 - 96)
Reporting Person – Ray Morgan

AGENDA ENDS

Date Published - 8 July 2020

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



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Agenda Item 4.

Schedule Referred to in Declaration of Interests

Council-appointed directorships

Councillor D J Bittleston	
Export House Limited	Thameswey Guest Houses Limited
Rutland Woking (Carhouse Lane) Limited	Thameswey Housing Limited
Rutland (Woking) Limited	Thameswey Limited
Rutland Woking (Residential) Limited	Victoria Square Residential Limited
Thameswey Developments Limited	VSW Hotel Limited
Victoria Square Woking Limited	

Councillor A Azad	
Thameswey Central Milton Keynes Limited	Thameswey Housing Limited
Thameswey Developments Limited	Thameswey Limited
Thameswey Energy Limited	Thameswey Maintenance Services Limited
Thameswey Guest Houses Limited	Thameswey Solar Limited
Thameswey Sustainable Communities Limited	

Councillor C S Kemp	
Thameswey Guest Houses Limited	Thameswey Housing Limited
Thameswey Limited	

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

Councillor G S Cundy	
Brookwood Cemetery Limited	Brookwood Park Limited
Woking Necropolis and Mausoleum Limited	

Ray Morgan, Chief Executive	
Export House Limited	Thameswey Limited
Rutland Woking (Carthouse Lane) Limited	Victoria Square Residential Limited
Rutland Woking (Residential) Limited	VSW Hotel Limited
Rutland (Woking) Limited	Victoria Square Woking Limited
Thameswey Maintenance Services Limited	Woking Shopping Limited

Douglas Spinks, Deputy Chief Executive	
Brookwood Cemetery Limited	Thameswey Energy Limited
Brookwood Park Limited	Thameswey Limited
Energy Centre for Sustainable Communities Limited	Thameswey Solar Limited
Export House Limited	Thameswey Sustainable Communities Limited
Thameswey Central Milton Keynes Limited	Woking Necropolis and Mausoleum Limited
Woking Shopping Limited	

Peter Bryant, Director of Legal and Democratic Services	
Brookwood Cemetery Limited	Thameswey Energy Limited
Brookwood Park Limited	Thameswey Guest Houses Limited
Energy Centre for Sustainable Communities Limited	Thameswey Housing Limited
Kingfield Community Sports Centre Limited	Thameswey Limited
Rutland Woking (Carthouse Lane) Limited (alternate for Ray Morgan)	Thameswey Maintenance Services Limited
Rutland (Woking) Limited (alternate for Ray Morgan)	Thameswey Solar Limited
Thameswey Central Milton Keynes Limited	Thameswey Sustainable Communities Limited
Thameswey Developments Limited	Woking Necropolis and Mausoleum Limited

Leigh Clarke, Director of Finance	
Kingfield Community Sports Centre Limited	

Louise Strongitharm, Director of Housing	
Thameswey Developments Limited	Thameswey Housing Limited
Thameswey Guest Houses Limited	Thameswey Limited

Julie Fisher, Director of Community Services

Victoria Square Woking Limited

EXECUTIVE – 16 JULY 2020

WOKING COMMUNITY SAFETY ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY

Executive Summary

This report provides the Executive with the opportunity to agree the proposed new Anti Social Behaviour Policy and requests delegated powers from the Anti Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 to appropriate officers to enable the implementation of these provisions.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

- (i) the Anti Social Behaviour Policy be adopted;**
- (ii) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive to review the Anti Social Behaviour Policy from time to time, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to ensure that it is updated to reflect good practice, current legislation and case law;**
- (iii) the level of Fixed Penalty Notice for a breach of a Community Protection Notice be set at £75.00 and reduced to £50.00 if payment is received within 14 days;**
- (iv) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive to issue Closure Notices under Part 4 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014;**
- (v) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive to:-**
 - a. issue Community Protection Notices;**
 - b. authorise registered social landlords to issue Community Protection Notices;**
 - c. issue Fixed Penalty Notices for breach of a Community Protection Notice;**
 - d. authorise any persons to issue Community Protection Notices and issue Fixed Penalty Notices for breach of a Community Protection Notice;**
 - e. take remedial action when a Community Protection Notice has not been complied with.**

under Part 4 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

Woking Community Safety Anti Social Behaviour Policy

Reasons for Decision

Reason: This report requests the agreement of the new Anti Social Behaviour Policy to provide clear guidance to residents and agree suitable delegated powers to appropriate officers to implement the provisions of the Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to help manage and reduce anti social behaviour.

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

Background Papers: [Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#)
[Home Office Guidance July 2014](#)

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Oli Walker, Anti Social Behaviour Officer
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Portfolio Holder: Councillor Colin Kemp
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Shadow Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ann-Marie Barker
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Date Published: 8 July 2020

Woking Community Safety Anti Social Behaviour Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (the Act) is the primary piece of legislation providing the Council with powers to tackle anti social behaviour (ASB).
- 1.2 The Act is designed to reduce crime and disorder and the impact of these on our communities. These flexible powers enable us to work more effectively with our key partners, such as Surrey Police and registered providers of housing, to tackle anti-social behaviour. Registered providers of housing can only be given delegated authority by applying to Woking Borough Council.
- 1.3 A new Anti Social Behaviour Policy has been written in order to provide clear guidance to the public as to what can be expected following any report of anti social behaviour, as well as standardising working practices when dealing with enforcement of offenders.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Anti Social Behaviour Policy (Policy) has been written to specifically address how we promote our response to anti social behaviour within the Borough, as well as how people can report to us directly any anti social behaviour they are experiencing. The Policy details a fair and transparent approach and strives to ensure the victim's considerations are taken into account at all times when addressing behaviours. A copy of the Policy can be found at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.2 The Policy shall be reviewed from time to time and updated in line with good practice, current legislation and case law.
- 2.3 The Act and relevant guidance are both large documents. However, these are the key powers available to the Council and Police to tackle anti social behaviour:
 - Civil Injunction
 - Criminal Behaviour Orders
 - Police Dispersal Powers
 - Community Protection Notices
 - Public Spaces Protection Order
 - Closure Notices
 - New Absolute Ground for Possession for ASB for secure and assured tenancies
 - Community Remedy (Police power in consultation with the Local Authority)
 - ASB Case review (Community Trigger)

Enforcement

- 2.4 The powers contained within the Act come with enforceable penalties and, in some cases, Woking Borough Council will be the lead authority. The Council is also the prosecuting authority for any breaches of public space protection orders and community protection notices. Both orders have sanctions for fixed penalty notices (up to £100) for breaches where a warning letter has previously been issued. It is recommended that the Council set the level of a fixed penalty notice for a breach of a Community Protection Notice at £75 and reduced to £50 if payment is received within 14 Days. The Council will receive all income from any enforcement activity, including fixed penalty notices.
- 2.5 Enforcement will only be considered once all requirements from the Act have been satisfied. Community Protection Warnings will be issued giving clear guidance as to timeframes in which we expect the conditions set are adhered to. Community Protection Warnings will only be issued if Woking Borough Council is satisfied that should they not be adhered to then we

Woking Community Safety Anti Social Behaviour Policy

have the ability to proceed to a full Community Protection Notice and the potential then for subsequent prosecution. As per the Community Protection Warning the Community Protection Notice must detail relevant timescales for the notice to be fulfilled. Only on breach of Community Protection Notice will there be a need to consider how the breach is prosecuted with Fixed Penalty Notices being the first consideration prior to any court summons.

Next Steps

- 2.6 Officers from the Council have been working with relevant internal services and partner agencies to develop and agree processes and procedures to form the new Policy document to ensure the consistent and transparent implementation of these powers. These arrangements will be put into place in the event that the Policy is adopted by Council.
- 2.7 Training in relation to best practice is ongoing and revisited when appropriate. Considerations are given to recognised organisations and consultancies in order to maintain staff competency.

3.0 Implications

Financial

- 3.1 It is anticipated that we can continue to implement the provisions of the Act within existing resources. However, if enforcement of the Act increases substantially, there may be some future additional legal costs associated with court proceedings. An application for costs payable by the defendant shall be made following successful Court proceedings.

Human Resource/Training and Development

- 3.2 There will be implications for front line staff on the implementation and enforcement of the powers both in terms of staff time and training. There may also be an impact on Legal Services if more anti social behaviour action occurs.

Community Safety

- 3.3 The Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides tools and powers that will support our work around community safety and our Community Strategy priority of providing a clean, healthy and safe environment. It helps the Council fulfil its statutory duty to reduce crime and disorder. Having a clear and concise policy will assist the Community Safety Team to undertake this role and will allow victims to understand the steps the team shall take to address the issues.
- 3.4 The use of the ASB legislation will be monitored and reported in the quarterly Safer Woking Partnership reports which are routinely sent to Members, and will also be reported to the Community Safety Task Group.

Risk Management

- 3.5 None.

Sustainability

- 3.6 None.

Equalities

- 3.7 None.

Safeguarding

3.8 None.

REPORT ENDS

Anti Social Behaviour Policy – Community Safety

Anti social behaviour has a wide definition that incorporates many different behaviours, including those that would not meet a criminal threshold or a statutory nuisance. The impact that these behaviours can have on a community or an individual can be devastating. From an individual feeling targeted to a community losing faith in the services there to protect them the consequences in not challenging anti social behaviour can lead to long term lasting damage.

Evidence suggests that when anti social behaviour is challenged at an early stage and not be allowed to manifest over time the likelihood of the behaviour continuing is significantly reduced. Conversely if left unchallenged it is likely to escalate into behaviours that can cross into a criminal threshold.

The Anti Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 (ASB C+P 2014) was introduced to allow local authorities, and where delegated Housing Associations, greater powers to work alongside the Police in addressing anti social behaviour. The definitions within the act encompass a variety of behaviours which could be considered as anti social and unacceptable in certain contexts. The incidents do not necessarily need to be criminal to be considered as anti social behaviour, nor do they have to be recorded with Police in order to be addressed.

Local authorities have previously relied on legislation such as Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 in order to deal with reports they receive. The Anti Social Behaviour Crime and Police Act 2014 adds significant tools and powers to the existing legislation and also includes two new measures designed to empower victims of anti social behaviour:-

- **The Community Trigger – gives victims the ability to demand action, starting with a review of their case, where the locally defined threshold is met.**
- **The Community Remedy – gives victims a say in the out-of-court punishment of perpetrators for low-level crime and anti-social behaviour.**

Within the act, and particularly relevant to local authority functions that consider the use of enforcement action, is the introduction of Community Protection Warnings (CPW's) and Community Protection Notices (CPN's). These allow the issuer to highlight and identify behaviour that has been identified as ongoing, unreasonable and having a detrimental effect to those in the community.

Purpose

This Anti Social Behaviour Policy has been drafted in line with the following principles and aims to ensure that all victims of anti social behaviour can expect the following. All enforcement action that is deemed necessary will also be subject to the same principles.

- Is fair, accountable, consistent, proportionate and transparent.
- Is an effective use of resources through a risk based methodology.
- Improves protection for the community and businesses within.
- Reduces the regulatory burden on businesses.
- Actively seek to involve both the community and businesses in any resolution.
- Seek to involve both the community and businesses in any review and development of the policy.

Our Objectives

- Reduce anti social behaviour.
- Put victims of anti social behaviour at the heart of any resolution.
- Develop, review and update policies aimed at tackling anti social behaviour.
- Use all legislation available to tackle anti social behaviour where enforcement is necessary.
- To take a multi-agency approach to tackling anti social behaviour ensuring the right agency is dealing. To work alongside Police, Housing and Environmental Health to ensure consistency.
- Provide clear guidance around policy so that public expectation can be met at all times.
- Embrace best practise and be open to change when further guidance is published.

How to report anti social behaviour to Woking Borough Council

- Online via the online reporting mechanism
- Phone
- Email
- In person at the front counter
- Letter
- 3rd party – via local councillors, Surrey County councillors, MP etc.

**** ALL REPORTS WILL BE HANDLED IN THE STRICTEST OF CONFIDENCE ****

What to expect once a complaint has been made

On receipt of a complaint via any means, you should expect a response within 2 working days (weekends and bank holidays will not be included towards this deadline). The initial response may simply be an acknowledgement of the complaint with no further update and where necessary a unique case reference number will be assigned to you.

If required, an information pack will be sent out which may contain practical advice on how to deal with anti social behaviour, information sheets, diary sheets or any other relevant paperwork. Within the pack will be guidance on how to complete any paperwork that may need to be returned along with a pre-paid envelope in order to return them.

When incident/diary sheets are returned, an assessment will be made in regards to the information provided which will then determine the next actions undertaken, in accordance to the level of the complaint, until such time as the case is closed.

If there is no receipt of requested materials within either 4 weeks, or an agreed timescale (later of the two options) then an assessment as to why this is will be made. If there are concerns that they have not been returned due to a fear of reprisal, language barrier or any other recognised reason, then you will be contacted again in order to establish what your expectations are and what it is we can offer to assist. If no return has been made and it is believed this is a result of no further incidents occurring you can expect your case to be closed and a letter sent to you with this justification. Details will be contained within the letter explaining a route to appeal this decision.

If your case is closed and you experience a repeat of any anti social behaviour from the same source your case will be reopened and this will be taken into consideration when looking at options available. If the anti social behaviour is from a different source you can expect to go through the same process as detailed above.

Timescales in which your complaint is dealt with will vary significantly, especially when the behaviour experienced is infrequent but ongoing. The complexity of the case may also result in the length before satisfactory resolution is met being longer than possibly anticipated.

Interventions

- Verbal warnings
- Warning letters
- Office interviews
- Referrals to other agencies, such as mental health or substance abuse services
- Mediation
- Acceptable Behaviour Contracts/Agreements (ABC's and ABA's)
- Referrals to other departments within the local authority for consideration of powers specific to that department (eg housing may consider Notice of Seeking Possession – NOSP)
- Referrals to Police for immediate enforcement action.

Legal remedies

- Community Protection Warning/Notice and any subsequent enforcement following a breach of Community Protection Notice (eg fine, remedial action, remedial order, forfeiture order, seizure and criminal behaviour order)
- Civil Injunction
- Court undertakings
- Any other enforcement action specific to another department within Woking Borough Council

Partnership Working

We work with partner agencies wherever necessary to achieve the best possible outcome for the victim. This may mean your case is discussed in a multi-agency forum with all relevant parties present. If this is the case, we will inform you of this prior to any discussions taking place.

Other examples where partnership work may be applicable include, but are not limited to:-

- Nuisance premises / partial house closures
- Dispersal Orders
- Animal nuisance and Abatement Notices under the Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Joint Action Group (JAG)
- Community Harm and Risk Management Meeting(CHaRMM)
- Surrey ASB Task Group
- Surrey Probation Service – Community Payback Scheme

EXECUTIVE – 16 JULY 2020

INDEPENDENT DIRECTORS OF SUBSIDIARIES

Executive Summary

In the Investment Programme report submitted to Executive on 6 February 2020 and approved by Council on 13 February 2020 it was noted that a report was to have been submitted to Council in April in respect of increasing the number of Independent Directors on the Council's subsidiary companies and to formalise their respective terms of office.

The reason for the proposed change is that whilst the current Independent Directors have played a key role in the Governance of the Companies, due to the high level of activity and increasing scale of the business, it would be appropriate to increase the number of Independent Directors and formalise the period of service having regard to best practice.

The proposal is to increase the number of Independent Directors so that each subsidiary can have two Independent Directors; this will apply to Thamesway Group companies and any other Council subsidiaries.

To implement the proposal it is proposed that Council appoint a Panel of Members, comprising of the Group Leaders or their nominee, to oversee the recruitment and to recommend to Council on appointments. The proposed term of office for each Independent Director will normally be four years with a normal maximum term of office of eight years. Existing Independent Directors who wish to continue to be reappointed for four years to ensure continuity.

It is proposed to bring these revised arrangements into effect by 1 April 2021.

In summary, the proposal is to: -

- Increase the number of Independent Directors on subsidiary companies to two;
- Set a normal term of office at four years;
- Set a normal maximum term of office to eight years;
- Reappoint those current Independent Directors that wish to continue for a further period of four years; and
- Appoint a Panel of Members to oversee the recruitment process and recommend appointments to Council.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

- (i) the number of Independent Directors on Council subsidiaries be increased to two;**
- (ii) the normal term of office of an Independent Director be four years;**
- (iii) the normal maximum term of office of an Independent Director be eight years;**

- (iv) the current Independent Directors be reappointed for four years from 1 April 2021; and
- (v) a Panel of Members be appointed to oversee the recruitment process and recommend appointments to the Council.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To improve the governance arrangements of subsidiary companies.

The items above will need to be dealt with by way of a recommendation to Council.

Background Papers: None.

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

Date Published: 8 July 2020

REPORT ENDS

EXECUTIVE – 16 JULY 2020

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION PEER CHALLENGE

Executive Summary

The Council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge in November 2019. This followed an earlier review in 2015. The report of the LGA is attached as an Appendix to this report.

Overall the report is positive about the Council, its ambition, its political leadership and its management capacity. The value of such reviews is that over time there are always things that can be improved. In that regard the LGA has made a series of recommendations which are set out and addressed in this report.

The Executive is requested to approve the proposed response set out in the recommendations of this report.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider this report as “pre-decision scrutiny” at its meeting on 13 July 2020 and its comments or proposals will be reported to the Executive.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) Officers prepare a summary strategy document based on existing approved strategies and present it to Council for approval as part of the Business Plan process for 2021/22;
- (ii) following the approval by Council of the summary document of existing approved strategies, proposed at (i) above, to undertake a programme of communications with residents and stakeholders outlining the wider policy approach of the Council;
- (iii) Officers undertake a series of public engagement events to explain the framework for town centre development proposals;
- (iv) the Citizens Panel be re-established and a programme of issues upon which to consult it be established with an initial focus on the health and well-being in partnership with the Integrated Care Partnership;
- (v) a survey of Members be undertaken to establish what further information they would find helpful to include in the Green Book and what further awareness raising and/or training is required in respect of the Council’s financial arrangements;
- (vi) the proposal to Council in respect of a Standards Protocol to allow Members access to commercially sensitive information in respect of Thameswey Group companies, and any other Woking Borough Council subsidiaries, be supported;

Local Government Association Peer Challenge

- (vii) the consideration by the Director of Finance of the appropriateness of borrowing periods be highlighted when the Council is requested to approve its annual budgets and its annual accounts;
- (viii) the Council's efficiency strategy be revitalised in two main parts, one to explore procurement savings and the other to explore operational efficiencies through automation and use of digital services;
- (ix) an Internal Audit Review be undertaken in respect of the Overview and Scrutiny function and the resources required to ensure its effectiveness;
- (x) Officers review the extent to which customer feedback opportunities and Local Government Association case studies could be used in the management of the Council's services with a view to improving outcomes and securing efficiency improvements linked to the efficiency strategy;
- (xi) the use of Zoom, Teams and Digital services will all be expanded and continued, post Coronavirus, and form part of the efficiency strategy, use of automation; and
- (xii) in the autumn the Council should consider its longer-term management arrangements as part of its 2021/22 business planning process.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To determine the response to the LGA Peer Challenge.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers:	None.
Reporting Person:	Ray Morgan, Chief Executive Email: ray.morgan@woking.gov.uk, Ext: 3333
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Shadow Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Ann-Marie Barker Email: cllrann-marie.barker@woking.gov.uk
Date Published	8 July 2020

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Local Government Association offers its Members an opportunity to be reviewed by Peers through its Corporate Peer Challenge process. The Council requested its first Peer Challenge in 2015 and to build upon that experience requested another review in November 2019. This further review of its arrangements and proposals will enable the Council to satisfy itself that it has taken into account the issues it needs to in pursuing its wider objectives.

The Peer Team

- 1.2 Experienced Elected Member and Officer Peers deliver Peer Challenges.

Scope and focus

- 1.3 The Peer Team considered the following five questions which form the core components looked at by all Corporate Peer Challenges. These are the areas that the LGA believes are critical to councils' performance and improvement:

1. Understanding of the local place and priority setting: Does the council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
2. Leadership of Place: Does the council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
3. Financial planning and viability: Does the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
4. Organisational leadership and governance: Is there effective political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change and transformation to be implemented?
5. Capacity to deliver: Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?

Scope

- 1.4 In addition to these questions, the scope the Council set of the Peer Challenge Team was:

“The Council has asked for a Peer Challenge to enable it to receive an independent review of its arrangements and proposals so that it can be satisfied that it has taken into account the issues it needs to address in pursuing its wider objectives.”

Outcome of the Peer Challenge

- 1.5 This report provides Officer Proposals in light of the Corporate Peer Challenge report set out at Appendix 1. Each Peer recommendation is commented upon in the following sections of this report.

2.0 Peer Challenge Key recommendations

- 2.1 The recommendations are set out at section 2 of the report attached at Appendix 1. Each recommendation is repeated below together with Officer comments and proposals on taking forward the recommendations.

Prepare an overarching organisational strategy so others can understand and own what you are trying to achieve now and in the future.

- 2.2 Historically the Council has had a variety of strategies that are well aligned with key strategies such as the Local Development Framework, Woking 2050, Housing and Economic Development being key components that are then reflected in the annual service plans, budgets and investments programmes and have been aligned under “People, Place and Us”. It is clear from the Peer Challenge that stakeholders would welcome a summary level strategy which provides a high level “overarching” strategy to enable people to understand the activities of the Council in the wider context.
- 2.3 It is proposed that Officers prepare a summary strategy document based on existing approved strategies and present it to Council for approval as part of the Business Plan process for 2021/22.

Communicate the rationale for the Council’s vision and priorities to all stakeholders

- 2.4 It is recognised that some stakeholders and the wider population have not received an explanation of the rationale underpinning the Council’s policies and strategies. Whilst the policies of the Council have been formulated over a number of years through wide public engagement the fact that in many cases this was several years before people saw the impact of those decisions and for some they were not here when the policy directions were formulated..
- 2.5 Following the approval by Council of the summary document of existing approved strategies, para.2.3 above refers; it is proposed to undertake a programme of communications with residents and stakeholders outlining the wider policy approach of the Council.
- 2.6 On the specific issue of the development of the Town Centre and its surrounding area it is acknowledged that more could be done to explain the rationale behind the developments in the town centre. It is therefore proposed to undertake a series of public engagement events to explain the framework for town centre development proposals.

Refresh your approach to citizen engagement to move away from perceptions such as “Here it is, we’re going to do it”, and “We get pretty pictures and it’s a done deal”

- 2.7 The Council successfully operated a Citizens Panel and a series of Focus Groups that contributed to the establishment of a number of its key current policies. However it is acknowledged that this general approach to citizen engagement has lapsed as the focus moved to implementation of those policies. This was exacerbated during the period of austerity where increasingly activities that did not directly contribute to meeting the immediate needs of residents were deferred or cancelled so as to avoid reductions in service provision.

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- 2.8 It is proposed to re-establish the Citizens Panel and establish a programme of issues upon which to consult it with an initial focus on health and well-being in partnership with the Integrated Care Partnership.

Make it easier for elected members and officers to be aware of and understand the Council's overall financial position

- 2.9 This is a major challenge given the complexity of Local Government Finance and the extent of the arm's length company structures. The Director of Finance provides regular briefings to Members and provides more detailed information and discussion at the Finance Task Group. More widely the Green Book, summarising the Council's position is published monthly with the exception of the COVID emergency.
- 2.10 It is proposed that a survey of Members be undertaken to establish what further information they would find helpful to include in the Green Book and what further awareness raising and/or training is required in respect of the Council's financial arrangements.
- 2.11 The issue of openness and transparency of the activities of the arm's length companies has been progressed. Members have historically been able to receive commercially sensitive material from the companies if they signed a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA). To simplify this process and to enable all Members to receive the Monthly information produced by Thamesway a report was presented to the Standards and Audit Committee on 5 March 2020, with proposals to simplify the procedures by which Members could receive Board papers and attend Board meetings. There were two possibilities:-
- The Council could adopt a "Standards Protocol". This would require Members to respect the confidentiality of confidential information relating to Council-owned companies. A breach of the Protocol would constitute a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.
 - The Declaration of Acceptance of Office form, signed by Members when they are elected, could be expanded to cover confidential information of Council-owned companies.
- 2.12 The Standards and Audit Committee preferred the option of a "Standards Protocol". This would allow Members more time to understand the form than would be available at the election count. The Monitoring Officer has consulted all Members on the proposal, and will present a report to Council on 30 July 2020.
- 2.13 It is proposed that the proposal to Council in respect of a Standards Protocol to allow Members access to commercially sensitive information in respect of Thamesway Group companies, and any other Woking Borough Council subsidiaries, be noted.

Enhance the role and profile of political leadership in the Council and in the community

- 2.14 From an Officer view point the Leadership from the Leader of the Council and his Executive is effective and it is difficult to see how it could be improved. The Leader of the Council also encourages a proactive approach by Portfolio Holders.
- 2.15 Accordingly, there is no Officer proposal in respect of this recommendation.

Consider structuring future borrowing to align to the life of assets across the Council's portfolio could be considered

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- 2.16 The Director of Finance regularly reviews, as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, the Investment Programme and the Treasury Management Strategy the appropriate borrowing strategy. The major investments by the Council are in land and property, which is why the majority of borrowing has been for 50 years on an annuity basis. It is considered that this works well for the Council.
- 2.17 It is acknowledged that there are some shorter life assets where the writing down of those assets is over a shorter term reflective of the life of that asset. This is reflected in the overall treasury management activity rather than by aligning specific loans to specific assets.
- 2.18 It is recognised that this detailed consideration by the Director of Finance could be highlighted when the Council approves its annual budgets and when it approves its accounts.

Consider renewing your efficiency strategy in order to bridge the gap in your MTFS without relying solely on investment returns

- 2.19 It is acknowledged that the programme of efficiency savings needs revitalisation.
- 2.20 It is proposed to progress this in two main parts, one to explore procurement savings and the other to explore operational efficiencies through automation and use of digital services.

More clearly articulate how decisions are aligned to the Council's priorities, in order to address perceptions such as "The new buildings are just for outsiders"

- 2.21 This recommendation reflects the issues commented upon in paragraphs 2.4 to 2.6 and Recommendation (iii) to "undertake a series of public engagement events to explain the framework for town centre development proposals".

Review the effectiveness and resourcing of Overview and Scrutiny

- 2.22 Officers consider that resources have been made available to fully support the Overview and Scrutiny function but clearly, some Members do not.
- 2.23 It is proposed to undertake an Internal Audit Review of the Overview and Scrutiny function and the resources required to ensure its effectiveness.

Address concerns and mistrust about a perceived lack of transparency and oversight of trading companies

- 2.24 The concerns expressed to the Peer Challenge about Overview and Scrutiny also related to transparency and oversight of the "arm's length" companies and the extent to which the Council considers matters in Part 2 (Private) and the high volume of material supporting such report.
- 2.25 On the issue of transparency of "arm's length" companies for Members of the Council, paragraphs 2.11 to 2.13 and Recommendation (vi) "that the proposal to Council in respect of a Standards Protocol to allow Members access to commercially sensitive information in respect of Thameswey Group companies, and any other Woking Borough Council subsidiaries, be noted", seeks to address those concerns.
- 2.26 On the issue of Part 2 (Private) reports Officers seek to keep those to a minimum and wherever possible put information in the Part 1 (Public) part of meetings with the confidential information only in the private part. Wherever possible Officers seek to arrange Member

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Briefing sessions on complex matters well before the meeting at which decisions are sought. On acquisitions, the reports are concise and provide all the key information needed for a decision, the volume of material relates to the supporting reports on valuation and due diligence to complete the evidential trail. No changes are proposed to these arrangements.

Expand the use of customer feedback and benchmarking to inform your performance management

- 2.27 During the Peer Challenge there was, understandably, much focus on the major regeneration activity undertaken by the Council. Less was said about day to day service delivery and management. The scale of those operations and the impact they have on the community is extensive and relate to the majority of the time of Officers and Leading Members in managing the extensive portfolios of activity.
- 2.28 The Peer Challenge has raised the issue of the use of customer feedback and benchmarking in managing service activity. Customer Feedback does feature in a number of service areas and some are reported in the Green Book; consideration will be given to what further customer feedback might help in measuring performance or improving services. Benchmarking is however more challenging as finding suitable comparators has historically proven difficult because organisations do things differently. It is perhaps the differences which will give the Council opportunities for the future and as part of our future business planning process we will consider, over time, case studies produced by the Local Government association (available via its web site) to help inform service improvement.
- 2.29 It is therefore proposed to review the extent to which customer feedback opportunities and the Local Government Association case studies could be used in the management of the Council's services with a view to improving outcomes and securing efficiency improvements linked to the efficiency strategy.

Explore further opportunities to modernise interaction with residents and businesses, e.g. video updates, tenant's digital services

- 2.30 The proposal by the Peer Challenge was most timely given the current experience of the Council due to Coronavirus. The Council is already engaging with its residents and businesses through Zoom, Teams and increasing the use of other digital service.
- 2.31 It is proposed that these will all be expanded and continued post Coronavirus as part of the efficiency strategy, alongside the use of automation.

Bring to a conclusion your succession plans for the CMG and the Communities function

- 2.32 The management development work undertaken through the Korn Ferry programme has strengthened the management of the Council and supported longer-term business continuity. Members were notified on 28 April 2020 of the changes to organisational arrangements and the appointment of key personnel, which has secured senior management capacity for the Council.
- 2.33 In the autumn the Council will need to consider its longer term management arrangements as part of its 2021/22 business planning process.

3.0 Implications

Financial

- 3.1 The majority of the recommendations do not give rise to additional costs. Work to implement the efficiency savings will incur costs but on a net basis will produce savings. It is considered, subject to reviewing the outcome of Coronavirus on the Council's resources, that these recommendations can be implemented within existing resources.

Human Resource/Training and Development

- 3.2 As with financial implications the majority of the recommendations do not give rise to a need for additional staff or training programmes. Work to implement the efficiency savings will place an increased demand on staff time which may cause some delays elsewhere in Council activity. It is considered that these recommendations can be implemented within existing human resources.

Community Safety

- 3.3 There are no community safety issues raised by this report.

Risk Management

- 3.4 There are no new risk management issues raised by this report. When implementing efficiency savings as assessments will be undertaken as a normal part of business management.

Sustainability

- 3.5 There are no new sustainability issues raised by this report.

Equalities

- 3.6 There are no new equality issues raised by this report.

Safeguarding

- 3.7 There are no new safeguarding issues raised by this report.

4.0 Consultations

- 4.1 The LGA Peer Challenge Report is a product of extensive engagement with Members and Stakeholders. This report seeks to implement the recommendation.
- 4.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive this report for pre-decision scrutiny and its observations will be reported to the Executive.

REPORT ENDS

Corporate Peer Challenge **Woking Borough Council**

12th – 14th November 2019

Feedback Report Final

1. Executive Summary

Woking Borough Council (WBC) has been leading the clear sighted, ambitious and successful regeneration of the town centre and has bold plans for further developments. This is funded through an approach with significant long term borrowing to deliver regeneration and to generate income at a scale which is atypical amongst district councils. This entrepreneurial model has been achieved through a strong and collaborative relationship between members and officers over a number of years. The staff of Woking Borough Council operate in a can do culture that finds solutions to the challenges they encounter to deliver success for themselves, the Council and the people of Woking. Officers are not bound tightly by organisational boundaries and they proactively engage in work not traditionally within the remit of a Borough council.

Partners of all types speak highly of the Council's staff that they work with and their obvious dedication and hard work and it is a testament to the Council that the staff profile is stable even with the opportunities nearby London affords. The Council's vision and strategies and the outcomes it then delivers are focused on benefiting the people of Woking, particularly the more vulnerable members of society.

The broad political consensus on the ambitions has enabled the high profile and charismatic Chief Executive to provide the vision, direction and solutions necessary to achieve success. He has an impressive track record over a number of years. The challenge for the Council is to secure the legacy of this leadership through ensuring that the strategic vision is adopted by all stakeholders with a good understanding of the delivery plan to secure the immediate and long term future of the organisation and the borough.

Whilst there are many obvious successes for the Borough the Council may wish to consider preparing a strategy that outlines and explains the Council's vision and priorities and communicate it to all stakeholders so others can fully appreciate and own what the Council is trying to achieve now and in the future and that the decisions taken to achieve these are clearly aligned to the Council's priorities.

There is an opportunity to make it easier for elected members and officers to be aware of and understand the Council's overall financial position. There is also an opportunity to enhance the role and profile of political leadership in the Council and in the community. The peer team recommends that you consider how to refresh the approach to citizen engagement and expand the use of customer feedback and benchmarking to inform your performance management.

To support greater transparency the peer team recommend that the Council review the effectiveness and resourcing of Overview and Scrutiny and address concerns about a perceived lack of transparency and oversight of the trading companies and bring to a conclusion your succession plans for the Corporate Management Group and the Communities function.

With reference to the Council's financial position, it may wish to consider structuring the future borrowing to align to the life of assets across the Council's portfolio. This could be considered along with renewing the efficiency strategy in order to bridge the gap in the Medium Term Financial Strategy without relying solely on investment returns.

2. Key recommendations

- Prepare an overarching organisational strategy so others can understand and own what you are trying to achieve now and in the future
- Communicate the rationale for the Council's vision and priorities to all stakeholders
- Refresh your approach to citizen engagement to move away from perceptions such as "Here it is, we're going to do it", and "We get pretty pictures and it's a done deal"
- Make it easier for elected members and officers to be aware of and understand the Council's overall financial position
- Enhance the role and profile of political leadership in the Council and in the community
- Consider structuring future borrowing to align to the life of assets across the Council's portfolio could be considered
- Consider renewing your efficiency strategy in order to bridge the gap in your MTFS without relying solely on investment returns
- More clearly articulate how decisions are aligned to the Council's priorities, in order to address perceptions such as "The new buildings are just for outsiders"
- Review the effectiveness and resourcing of Overview and Scrutiny
- Address concerns and mistrust about a perceived lack of transparency and oversight of trading companies
- Expand the use of customer feedback and benchmarking to inform your performance management
- Explore further opportunities to modernise interaction with residents and businesses, e.g. video updates, tenants digital services
- Bring to a conclusion your succession plans for the CMG and the Communities function

3. Summary of the Peer Challenge approach

The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected your requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and agreed with you. The peers who delivered this Corporate Peer Challenge at Woking Borough Council were:

- **Cllr Paul James**, Leader, Gloucester City Council
- **Cllr Tim Bick**, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Cambridge City Council
- **John Robinson**, Chief Executive, Newark & Sherwood District Council
- **Sarah King**, Corporate Director, Support Services and S151 Officer, Eastleigh Borough Council

- **Craig Taylor**, Communities Manager, Rushcliffe Borough Council
- **Marcus Coulson**, Challenge Manager, Local Government Association

Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five questions which form the core components looked at by all Corporate Peer Challenges cover. These are the areas we believe are critical to councils' performance and improvement:

1. Understanding of the local place and priority setting: Does the council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
2. Leadership of Place: Does the council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
3. Financial planning and viability: Does the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
4. Organisational leadership and governance: Is there effective political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change and transformation to be implemented?
5. Capacity to deliver: Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?

Scope

In addition to these questions, the scope the Council set of the Peer Challenge Team was:

The Council has asked for a Peer Challenge to enable it to receive an independent review of its arrangements and proposals so that it can be satisfied that it has taken into account the issues it needs to address in pursuing its wider objectives.

The peer challenge process

It is important to stress that this was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement focussed and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement focus. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared for the peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent three days onsite at Woking Borough Council, during which the team:

- Spoke to more than 97 people including a range of Council staff together with councillors and external stakeholders
- Gathered information and views from more than 35 meetings, visits to key sites and additional research and reading
- Collectively spent more than 120 hours to determine our findings – the equivalent of one person spending 3½ weeks in Woking

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of their on-site visit (Tuesday 12th – Thursday 14th November 2019). In presenting feedback to you, they have done so as fellow local government members and officers, not professional consultants or inspectors. By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time. We appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things you are already addressing and progressing.

4. Feedback

4.1 Understanding of the local place and priority setting

The peer challenge team met a group of highly motivated elected members and officers at Woking Borough Council who are committed to Woking and the benefits they can provide for the people of the borough. They have an outward focused, place-making perspective with a clear and strong focus on the regeneration of the town centre that has been ongoing for a number of years. The town centre has changed considerably in the past few years with investment in the retail and office sectors. There is also the ongoing construction of housing targeted at specific groups in the borough, notably 16-30-year olds who are underrepresented. The aim is to attract them so they stay in the borough and make the overall population a more diverse and cohesive one. Without this approach local house prices in both the owner-occupied and rented sector would make developing mixed communities much more difficult. This approach demonstrates how the Council takes responsibility to develop the borough for the benefit of all. The peer team found a generally positive perception about the Council's understanding and promotion of inclusion and diversity, although there is an opportunity to make this approach clearer for others.

The peer team saw evidence that the senior decision-makers demonstrate a forward thinking, proactive approach to financial challenges that is more enterprising and bolder than many District Councils.

An area of improvement the peer team recommend is for the Council to prepare an overarching strategy so others can understand and own what the Council is trying to achieve now and in the future. Whilst the peer team accept this is not an approach the Chief Executive has felt necessary to adopt in the past it would enable others who see the changes taking place in the town centre and surrounding area and put them into context. Coupled with clearer communication of the rationale for the Council's vision and priorities, this would enable all stakeholders to understand that at the heart of this, at times, quite dramatic change, is a very value driven approach focused on benefits for as many of the people in the Borough as possible, which is commendable.

The Council should also consider refreshing its approach to citizen engagement to move away from a style summed up by one stakeholder as "Here it is, we're going to do it", and another as "We get pretty pictures and it's a done deal" to one of genuine early engagement where the decision has not already been taken and all options and choices are possible. In this way a greater variety of stakeholders would feel closely involved in the development of Council strategy and policy and be invested in it.

4.2 Leadership of Place

Woking Borough Council is an ambitious, innovative and creative Council that has a strong track record of success. The Council has a forward thinking and energetic leadership where there is "No such thing as standing still" and this is mostly reflective of the Chief Executive Ray Morgan. The whole group of elected members and officers are

passionate and proud of their place and they have a strong reputation amongst partners who appreciate their proactive approach which is focused on outcomes and driven through effective relationships that are seen by these partners as supportive and collegiate.

The Council cultivates relationships with partners that are purposeful and Woking focused. There are two aspects to this which are blended together, firstly a focus on commercial development, summed up by a partner who said, "The Council totally gets business", and secondly a focus on being compassionate, summed up by another partner commenting that "Woking stands up for the disadvantaged". This strongly values driven approach results in tangible, visible and positive evidence of leadership that creates physical development of the local environment, the creation of key partnership networks and a very positive reputation.

There is a high profile regeneration scheme in Sheerwater led by the Council. The scheme is an ambitious one, including plans for considerable investment in housing, roads, parks, shops and community facilities, making the area a desirable and attractive place to live. There is a close linkage with this scheme and the Hoe Valley School where the athletics track is located.

The creation of the ThamesWey Group of companies in 1999 has been an innovative and creative model to deliver housing for the betterment of local people. Although originally conceived as a way of implementing the Council's green and energy efficiency objectives, the group is now playing a vital role in the delivery of affordable housing and its potential to grow further has been realised since the previous peer challenge in 2015. As a result, ThamesWey are often asked to do things that are difficult and beyond the reach of other areas of the Council and they do so proudly and with success.

Whilst the Chief Executive is able to create and deliver innovation across the borough through different partners there is an opportunity to adjust the focus to ensure that others feel fully involved in the decision-making from the very beginning. The peer team recommend that the Council reflect on the approach to building consensus. Furthermore, and directly linked to the previous point the Council should consider how to more clearly articulate how decisions are aligned to the Council's priorities. One example the peer team heard was that, "The new buildings are just for outsiders", which refers to the new tower blocks going up as part of the Victoria Square development in the middle of Woking. These high rise blocks offer significant housing provision aimed at retaining the 16-30 age group that leave Woking and cannot return due to high house prices. The aim is for the apartments to be let at market value accompanied by the Council's "Earn Your Deposit Scheme" which enables the tenant to accumulate a deposit towards the purchase of a home. It is this type of reasoning that stakeholders could hear about to fully appreciate the Council's plans so they feel part of the future of the town and are able to influence and own the vision.

The 2015 Corporate Peer Challenge commented positively on the relationship between Woking Borough Council and Surrey County Council. This was based on good relationships and some innovative joint working to address local need. This is still evident and a new opportunity has arisen as the County Council is planning to move to a new headquarters in Woking, something the Borough Council has been very much

encouraging. This can lead to further improved relationships and further integration of services.

Whilst onsite a question arose of the Council's relationship with some of its immediate neighbours. The peer team understands why the Council's primary focus is on Woking itself but believes it should assure itself that it is maximising the opportunities to work with partners beyond Woking for the benefit of the borough and wider area, particularly where significant employers are located on the edge of the borough and have an impact beyond its boundaries.

4.3 Financial planning and viability

The Council is actively managing the financial risk associated with significant levels of borrowing of £1.3bn and rising, and has approval to borrow up to £2.3 billion. This level of borrowing is atypical amongst district councils. Woking is an outlier compared to all other district councils as its debt servicing is two and half times net revenue budget and commercial income funds the equivalent of 75% of the budget. Members and officers, by and large, felt comfortable with this level of indebtedness given the value of the assets held and being generated within the portfolio. However some concern was reported to exist by some Members and within the community at the risks of, for example, the economy entering into a recession. Careful asset management will be vital to protect against such eventualities.

The Council's investment strategy is designed to deliver social return within the borough through the creation of economic vitality and sustainability and it has been successful in this endeavour for some years. The Chief Finance Officer has an innovative approach to financial management and demonstrates a good understanding of risk, this is consistent with the Council's 'can do' attitude. The financial strategy allows the Council to maintain services and expand provision in areas not traditionally the responsibility of a borough council and external advice is taken to provide financial expertise on large projects as appropriate, so it would appear that risk is being managed effectively.

The areas the Council may wish to consider developing would be to make it easier for elected members and officers to be aware of, and understand, the Council's overall financial position. The peer team heard that outside of the Chief Executive and his immediate team it is not always clear what investments have been made, how the trading companies' structure works, and how the financial risks are structured. Increased transparency would allow greater discussion and even scrutiny of the financial aspect of Council business that would be shared by elected members and others.

The Council may wish to consider structuring future borrowing so that it aligns with the life of assets across the Council's portfolio. This would incur less cost over time. Furthermore, the peer team suggest that Woking consider renewing the efficiency strategy in order to bridge the gap in the Medium Term Financial Strategy without relying solely on investment returns. Higher Public Works Loan Board rates may make it more difficult to acquire properties with sufficient yield to deliver the returns the Council is seeking and the scale of the Council's ownership makes identifying

opportunities within the Borough more difficult. A more diverse approach to filling the budget gap will reduce pressure on the Council to make more and more acquisitions.

4.4 Organisational leadership and governance

The Executive Members at Woking Borough Council are fully engaged in the business of the day and are taking active ownership for their portfolios. From the evidence that the peer team saw and heard there appear to be good relationships between members and officers which were characterised as generally healthy and respectful. This a positive position to be in to develop a coherent response to future challenges the organisation may face.

The Chief Executive and his Corporate Management Group (CMG) have a complementary mix of skills that allows them to create new ideas, maintain the progress of current projects as well as engage in internal challenge to consider and manage risk.

The Council has made an effective investment in member training and development that was based on a recommendation in the previous LGA Corporate Peer Challenge from 2015. The democratic services and human resources functions are well led and there is a full suite of officer development opportunities for staff. Officers at all levels spoke highly of the training and development opportunities available to them and they felt valued.

There is a proactive, open engagement with internal audit within CMG welcoming recommendations and suggesting areas to be reviewed as appropriate. Furthermore, there is a good relationship with the Trade Union which is both respectful and fruitful. The contract management function with outsourced services is improving with a move towards a more partnership based approach in most cases rather than managing by the letter of the contract. This improves relationships and goodwill with these outsourcing partners.

The Council may wish to consider reviewing the effectiveness and resourcing of Overview and Scrutiny so that elected members can further develop their ability to hold the executive to account. One potential outcome of the above would be to address some of the concerns and mistrust about a perceived lack of transparency and oversight of the trading companies. Whilst there may be occasions when confidentiality is necessary, the structure of the trading companies does not need to be so opaque, especially when one considers that at some point in the future a new leader and officer cadre will need to understand how these are set up and run.

Linked to the above point is the peer team's recommendation that wherever possible the Council should take decisions in the public domain and give members ample opportunity to consider what an appropriate level of information prior to meetings is. While the peer team did not examine in detail the reports presented to Members on property acquisitions, we heard that a number of them were expected to digest huge volumes of information in a relatively short space of time. The Council may wish to reflect on the appropriate level of information provided and the process of member briefing prior to formal decisions being made.

As a whole there is a culture at the Council of strong officer leadership, which has delivered profound and positive change for the borough and its residents. As the organisation moves forward there is an opportunity to enhance the role and profile of political leadership in the Council and in the community to rebalance the Member/Officer relationship. Part of that rebalancing will be for the political leadership to develop and articulate their vision for the Council and Borough beyond the next election.

There would be greater resilience in the decision making on major projects if a more collegiate style was adopted. There are a range of major projects in the pipeline as well as the need to manage the day to delivery of services and ensure the organisation is fit for purpose for the future. The peer team felt that the current officer leadership style needs to be broadened out into a more inclusive model. It was felt by some Councillors that, on occasions, local Ward Members were brought into the discussion mid-way through project development. Early engagement could help limit the risk of project stall or failure. This is partly related to the visibility and succession planning points made earlier. The peer team believe this is central to making the most of the organisational capacity to address the next round of challenges.

As part of a revised style and culture in the Council it is well worth considering how to expand the use of customer feedback and benchmarking to inform Council performance management. The peer team heard a great deal about the major developments ongoing in Woking whilst onsite. What we didn't hear so much about was the day-to-day activity of the Council and particularly how it is driven by the measures of performance and how this may be linked to a cycle of improvement.

4.5 Capacity to deliver

There is a 'can do' culture throughout the organisation and clear examples were given by staff and partners throughout our time onsite. This finding replicates the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge from 2015 suggesting that the culture is firmly embedded in the Council and understood by those with whom they work. It was clear to the peer team that staff feel empowered to take decisions and are encouraged to be innovative, this was illustrated by the comment that "People are released to be creative", that we heard more than once.

The staff leading Democratic and Legal Services and Human Resources displayed a genuine commitment to staff training and development, backed by investment. The Council has participated in the LGA Graduate Programme for the past four years and the graduates are felt to have made a valuable contribution to the outcomes of the Council with clear benefits for the graduates and the organisation. The Council continues to utilise the apprenticeship levy funds by promoting internal work-based training opportunities and employing apprentices in areas such as legal, sports development and revenues.

In 2018 the Council began a major management development programme in partnership with Korn Ferry. This work targets senior and middle managers with the main objective being to increase the confidence, capability and resilience of all

management levels to enable them to meet future challenges and is linked back to the Council's Behaviour and Skills Framework. This seeks to ensure that development supports sustainable capabilities of staff for the future.

The Council provides an extensive programme of training and briefings for elected members, seeking to ensure that they have all the knowledge and skills necessary for their role as Councillors. The Council has successfully met the standards set by South East Employers' Charter for Member Learning and Development for the last ten years, adopting new ways of delivering training and introducing a behaviours and skills framework. The Korn Ferry programme has been extended to elected members with the objective being to achieve a greater level of strategic thinking and cohesion across the members of the Executive, enabling them to think about and plan for future challenges, including succession planning.

Whilst staff reported being stretched in their roles they did not feel over stretched and there was evidence to demonstrate that additional capacity is allocated at the point of inception of priority projects to ensure they can be delivered. There was also evidence that staff concerns were being acted upon, for example where the peer team heard about an incidence of bullying and harassment, it was also outlined how this was appropriately and effectively addressed.

The peer team heard about creative additions to the resourcing of the organisation for the benefit of the community such as the Transport Engineer post and the work with Family Support. These are both examples of where the Council provides services beyond its statutory duty.

The Council may wish to explore further opportunities to modernise interaction with residents and businesses. Such examples might be through the use of video updates and greater use of digital services for housing tenants. The LGA will be in touch to signpost the Council to others who do this well.

The peer team wish to suggest that the Council be cautious of the risk of project overload as there were many different activities explained and discussed whilst the team were onsite. Whilst this represents a vibrant and outcome focused organisation it did also feel like there were many projects going on at the same time. If staff feel stretched with their overall capacity they are likely to continue with these projects due to the significant reservoir of goodwill built up over the years. However this positive culture and working environment is not endless.

To an outsider the trading company arrangements appear opaque and require some considerable focus in order to understand how they all work. This is understood by the senior management team but this is less understood by others, including staff and stakeholders. The future senior managers have a huge agenda to fulfil and they will need both drive and public recognition. Therefore the Council may wish to bring to a conclusion the succession plans for CMG to establish clarity and also recruit into a lead officer role covering the Communities function which was an acknowledged gap in the senior management structure.

The Council is due to face something of a challenge in the coming years with the likely retirement of Ray Morgan the Chief Executive, Douglas Spinks, Deputy Chief Executive and Peter Bryant, Head of Democratic & Legal Services. There is also the widely understood retirement of Leader, Councillor David Bittleston, at the next elections in May 2020 that will create a new Conservative Group Leader and an unknown outcome from that election for the Council. This represents over 100 years of knowledge and experience successfully steering this organisation into its present healthy position. As with all other areas of its business this issue has been recognised and plans put in place. The recent appointment of Louise Strongitharm as Director of Housing addresses a known lack of senior capacity in this area which complements the established leadership demonstrated by Leigh Clarke as the Director of Finance. However with the leadership of Chief Executive, Ray Morgan the advantage has been his inspirational drive for the Council in all areas, and is seen as central to it by all partners. The downside of this approach is that the same partners expressed some concern of what happens when Ray departs, encapsulated by one health partner who commented, "Ray is so instrumental, what happens when he is not around?" As has been mentioned previously part of the inevitable rebalancing that will occur at this time will be for the political leadership to develop and articulate their vision for the Council and the Borough.

5 Next steps

You will undoubtedly wish to reflect on these findings and suggestions with your senior managerial and political leadership before determining how the Council wishes to take things forward.

As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of continued support which you can access through the **LGA Principal Adviser for the Region, Mona Sehgal** who is the main contact between your authority and the LGA. Mona can be contacted via email at mona.sehgal@local.gov.uk or by Telephone: 07795 291006 and can provide access to further support. We are also offering you a follow up visit in one year's time to consider progress on the recommendations of this report.

All connected with the peer challenge would like to wish you every success going forward. Many thanks to you and your colleagues for inviting the peer challenge and to everyone involved for their participation. In particular, please pass on our thanks to Frank Jeffery, Democratic and Legal Services and his team for their excellent support in organising the challenge and in particular Natalie Khan, Democratic Services Officer who managed an excellent job both before and during the onsite work. It was much appreciated.

On behalf of the peer challenge team. November 2019

Marcus Coulson

Programme Manager

Local Government Association

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EXECUTIVE – 16 JULY 2020

FRAMEWORK FOR RECOVERY

Executive Summary

A recovery framework for Woking's commercial centres in-line with the planned Government relaxation of the lock-down, and consumer attitudes to returning to such commercial centres, has been produced. The framework refers to the measures undertaken to assist the Borough's businesses through the Covid-19 crisis; the planning for recovery currently being undertaken; a comprehensive series of recommendations on the measures needed to help restore consumer confidence, and ultimately foot-flow to the Borough's commercial centres. Finally headline considerations of the longer-term transformational measures that need consideration in light of consumer trends pre-Covid-19 and the subsequent impact of Covid-19.

It is recognised by Government and allied agencies that such planning for recovery should now be undertaken at pace. Organisations such as the Institute of Place Management, Association of Town and City Management, Centre for Cities and the large consultancies are all moving forward with extensive research and recovery planning activity. Surrey has commenced its own Recovery Co-ordination Group and SE Local Enterprise Partnerships are looking at a wider 'safer towns' initiative.

The report identifies and makes recommendations for a number of potential actions for immediate approval by the Executive. The Framework for Recovery strategy report was considered by the Economic Development Task Group on 25 June 2020.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

the recommendations in the Framework for Recovery, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To implement the recommendations in the Framework for Recovery in order to assist the Borough's businesses through the Covid-19 crisis.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers: None.

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Contact Person: Chris Norrington, Business Liaison Manager
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Shadow Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ian Johnson
Email: cllrian.johnson@woking.gov.uk

Date Published: 8 July 2020

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Framework for Recovery strategy report was considered by the Economic Development Task Group on 25 June 2020. The Task Group seeks approval from the Executive to implement the recommendations in the Framework for Recovery as set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 As local economies begin the recovery process and with the ending of the lock-down being imminent, a Framework for Recovery for Woking's commercial centres in-line with the planned Government relaxation of the lock-down, and consumer attitudes to returning to such commercial centres, has been produced.
- 1.3 The framework gives reference to measures undertaken to assist the Borough's businesses through the Covid-19 crisis; the planning for recovery currently being undertaken; a comprehensive series of recommendations on the measures needed to help restore consumer confidence, and ultimately foot-flow to the Borough's commercial centres. Finally headline considerations of the longer-term transformational measures that need consideration in light of consumer trends pre-Covid-19 and the subsequent impact of Covid-19.
- 1.4 It is recognised by Government and allied agencies that such planning for recovery should now be undertaken at pace. Organisations such as the Institute of Place Management, Association of Town and City Management, Centre for Cities and the large consultancies are all moving forward with extensive research and recovery planning activity. Surrey has commenced its own Recovery Co-ordination Group and SE Local Enterprise Partnerships are looking at a wider 'safer towns' initiative.

2.0 Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The aim is to provide a framework that will identify the issues and challenges presented to the Borough's commercial centres which will prioritise the following objectives:
 - i) Introduce measures that will create a safe environment that is recognised by residents, workers and visitors alike.
 - ii) Create a 'Borough to consumer' marketing and PR campaign to promote this safe environment.
 - iii) Help restore customer foot-flow to the commercial centres as quickly as practically possible.
 - iv) Encourage Borough based employees to transition back to their pre-Covid workplaces.
 - v) Provide on-going tangible support to the Borough's business community.
 - vi) Identify and support sectors at specific high risk of failure and closure, especially SME businesses.
 - vii) Engage and build recovery capacity across key internal and external stakeholders.
 - viii) Plan for the four-stages of the crisis: Crisis, Pre-Recovery, Recovery and Transformation.

3.0 Activities

3.1 The framework centres on three main levels of activity that will help business reopen, increase consumer confidence and drive footfall back in to the town centre.

3.2 Woking Works

3.2.1 One to One Consultancy

3.2.2 The Start-up Woking Business Club consultants have been moved to Woking Works to offer all businesses support and advice. Advice and support has been provided on various topics including:

- i) Strategy & Resilience Planning
- ii) Financial planning including cashflow
- iii) Marketing – reengaging with customers
- iv) Digital Skills
- v) Government grants and loans
- vi) Health & Safety in the workplace

3.3 Communication & Promotion

3.3.1 A communications plan for business to business (B2B) and business to consumer (B2C) markets has been implemented by Business Liaison and Marketing & Communications to engage with both businesses and consumers, drawing their attention to the re-opening of the high street and businesses in general. The messaging focuses on “providing a safe environment in which to do business”, whether that is in the public centres or in the office space. A continued message of which businesses are open, when they are open, and what special offers they might have.

3.3.2 The Woking Works website – has been updated with more of an emphasis on promoting the Business Directory and associated special offers. A similar directory of open shops is intended to be seen on the <http://www.wearwoking.com> home page. Direct links from both websites to each other will help the exposure of both brands.

3.3.3 The Woking Works services, government and WBC health & safety advice, recovery podcasts and upcoming recovery webinars are also featured.

3.4 Town Centre Cleaning and Signage

3.4.1 Keeping the town centre public realm safe Neighbourhood Services colleagues have been implementing a deep cleansing regime which now includes spraying of street furniture on a programme each morning in addition to deep cleansing programme already undertaken on hard surfaces. Serco staff are now equipped with anti-bacterial spray and are repeatedly wiping down street furniture during the day.

3.4.2 Shopping centres have lots of signage in place and signage now extends into the car parks although we have stopped short of floor markings. Hand sanitisers are now in place throughout the car parks and again cleansing regimes will be stepped up with equipment repeatedly cleaned each day.

3.4.3 Town centre information signage is with us now so should be installed shortly. Again we are not going with floor markings, although individual businesses have done so.

3.4.4 Environmental Health colleagues continue to work with businesses helping them restart safely wherever possible.

4.0 Implications

Financial

- 4.1 The Government has allocated £89,172.00 to Woking to assist in the re-opening of the High Street, and public realm facing business. This has been made available through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). A funding agreement will need to be signed by the Council and ERDF. The objective is to use this fund as the primary funding resource. Secondary funding will need to be considered if required and drawn from existing budgets.

Human Resource/Training and Development

- 4.2 There are no additional human resources or training and development implications arising from the report.

Community Safety

- 4.3 There are community safety implications concerning the social distancing measures implemented by the Government in enclosed public and private spaces. All businesses must produce a risk assessment and display (at all entrances to their premises) the measures they have taken to protect both their customers, suppliers and staff.
- 4.4 Colleagues in Environmental Health and Surrey Police have enforcement powers to close businesses who repeatedly ignore such directives.
- 4.5 It is very difficult to enforce social distancing measures within the public realm. We must rely on the general public being sensible and staying the required distance away from other people. Neighbourhood Services colleagues will make the public realm clean, tidy and hygienic as realistically possible to keep the public as safe as possible to avoid an increase in Covid-19 cases.

Risk Management

- 4.6 Consumer and business confidence remains low resulting in a slow recovery rate of public realm facing businesses which has a knock on effect to the local economy as a whole.
- 4.7 There is a risk that health and safety measures and advice will not have much effect if the general public do not adhere to them resulting in a second wave outbreak of the virus in Woking.

Sustainability

- 4.8 The report highlights the importance in assisting businesses return to trading levels seen before the crisis, to get back to a new normal. This in turn will help the local economy remain sustainable.

Equalities

- 4.9 There are no equalities implications resulting from the report.

Safeguarding

- 4.10 There are no safeguarding implications resulting from the report.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 The framework recommends providing support, advice, communication and promotion as well as maintaining a high level of public realm cleanliness until December 2020. However the recovery process will most likely take longer. The Government have provided funding for the short-term reopening of businesses, so a review of the recovery status should take place by December 2020 and a decision made as to what additional support the Council provides.

6.0 Consultations

6.1 The Framework has been developed in dialogue with:

- The Woking Chamber of Commerce
- West Byfleet Business Association,
- Woking Asian Business Forum
- Enterprise M3 & the Growth Hub
- Woking Works Partners (NatWest Bank, Arcom IT, Air Social, Hamlyns Chartered Accountants, and Moore Barlow Solicitors)
- Woking Shopping
- Local businesses across the Borough.

REPORT ENDS

FRAMEWORK FOR RECOVERY

V1.7 08/07/2020

Project supported by



European Union

European Regional
Development Fund



HM Government



Matthews Associates

Panel Expert
OPE Programme



Cabinet Office



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Woking Post-Covid-19 Recovery Framework: Draft V1.5

1. Aims and Objectives

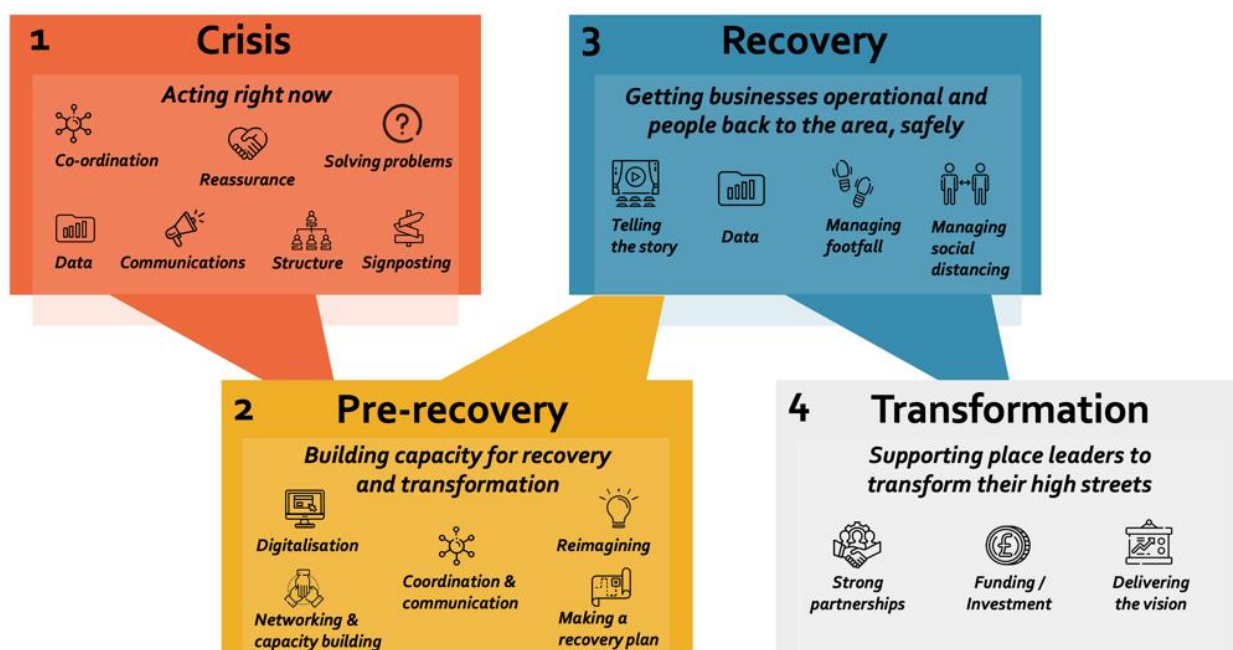
The aim of this report is to identify the issues and challenges presented to the Borough's commercial centres by the Covid-19 crisis. The report recommends a wide range of options to consider to support micro/SME businesses and to attract back residents, workers and visitors into the Borough's commercial centres. These in-line with the Government's phased relaxation of Covid-19 lock-down measures and the recommended activities outlined within the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund initiative announced 24th May 2020.

- Measures to create a safe environment, that is recognised by residents, workers and visitors
- Create a 'Borough to consumer' marketing and PR campaign to promote this safe environment
- Help restore customer foot-flow to the commercial centres as quickly as practically possible
- Encourage Borough based employees to transition back to their pre-Covid workplaces
- Provide on-going tangible support to the Borough's business community
- Identify and support sectors at specific high risk of failure and closure, especially SME businesses
- Engage and build recovery capacity across key internal and external stakeholders
- Plan for the four-stages of the crisis: Crisis, Pre-Recovery, Recovery and Transformation

1. Introduction:

The Recovery Framework plan will be based on recommended High Street Task Force four-stage framework process, which identifies four clear stages of the Covid-19 crisis from the initial lockdown crisis stage, through to the potential future transformation options for our towns and high streets. We are now (as at 3rd June) transitioning between the final elements of the 'crisis' stage, the main 'pre-recovery' stage and some aspects of the economy just entering the 'recovery' stage.

High Street Task-Force - Four Stage Framework

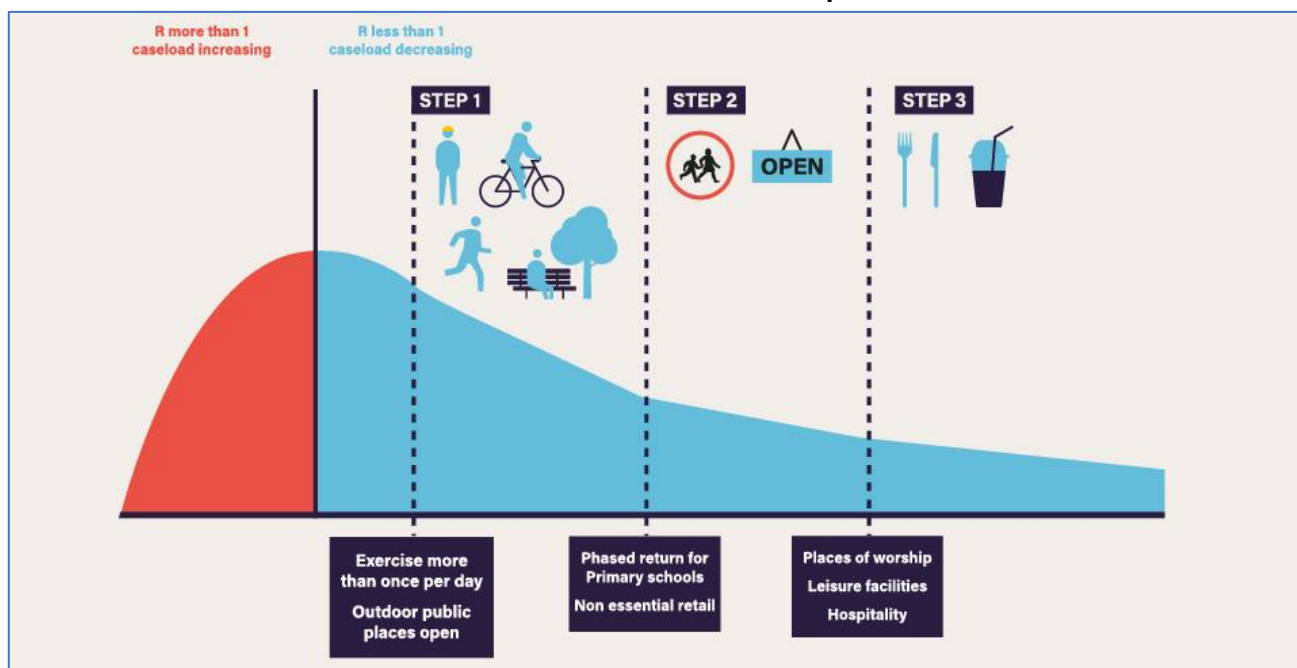


2. Consumer Perception Context:

We must look at any recovery plan within the dual context of what the Government has formally legislated for (and is advising via its published guidance), and as importantly, what the general public is feeling in terms of consumer sentiment, attitudes and future intentions. These are not necessarily aligned, as we are seeing with the discussions and debates over the extent of the relaxation of lock-down measures and the timeframes contained within the [Government's recovery strategy](#). These twin key drivers need to be accounted for and reflected within Woking's own recovery strategy.

The illustrations below taken from the Government Covid-19 recovery strategy and the most recent BVA/BRDC consumer sentiment tracker, show that although the Government steps of relaxing the lock-down in early June (1st and 15th) for retail and early July 2020 (no earlier than 4th July) for food and beverage/hospitality, consumers anticipated timeline to return to a restaurant or shopping mall are considerably longer at 4.1 months and 3.4 months respectively (see below). Although in-light of the well-publicised weekend crowds, these timelines could be interpreted as pessimistic for consumer sentiment. We are nevertheless potentially facing an imbalance between the relaxation of the lock-down measures and consumer confidence returning to sufficient levels to warrant their regular return to our town centres.

The Government Published timeline in relation to the virus reproduction 'R rate'



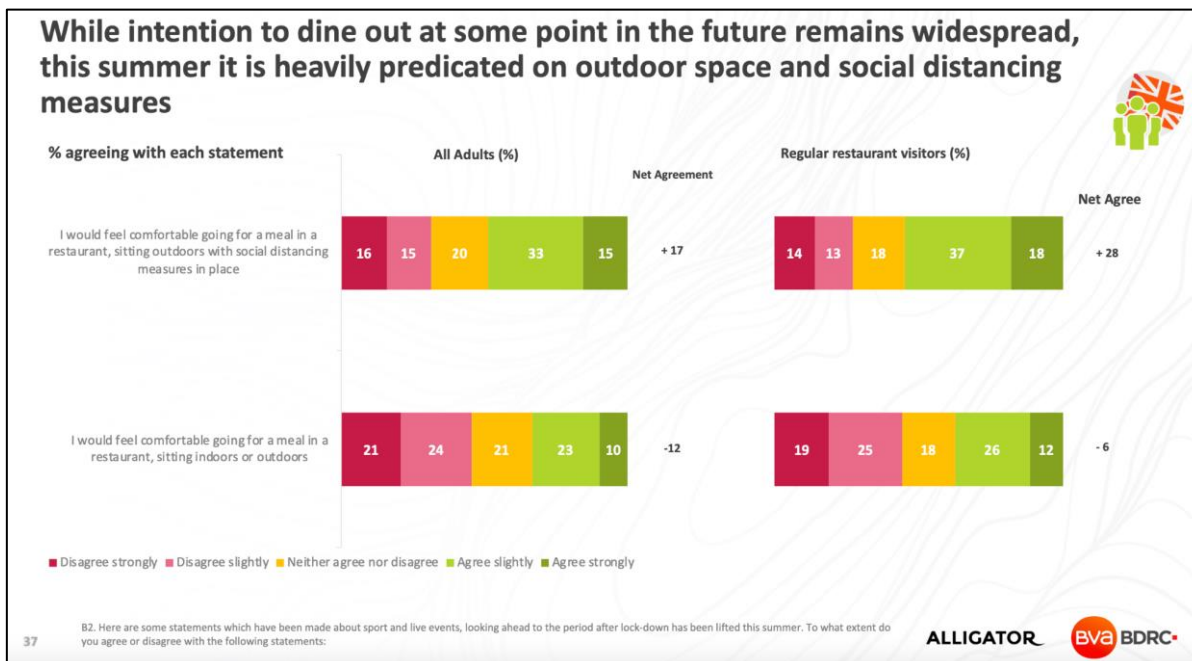
Step 1 took place w/c 11th May 2020, predominantly starting 13th May with the re-opening of garden centres. Step 2 commenced 1st June with car-showrooms and markets, with non-essential retail re-opening from 15th June. Step 3: leisure, hospitality including food and beverage is currently stated as not re-opening before 4th July and could be later if the 'R rate' goes above 1 or other factors in the five tests measurement change adversely.

BVA/BRDC Alligator Consumer Sentiment Tracker on the Impact of COVID-19 (29th May 2020)

The most recent BVA/BRDC Consumer sentiment tracker 26th–29th May, shows there is a still considerable time lag until consumers feel they will either go to a restaurant, go shopping or to a shopping mall.



The week 19th – 22nd May survey dug a bit deeper into attitudes for dining out, particularly relevant to Woking's food and beverage offer. The grey box out statement below is from the reports executive summary.

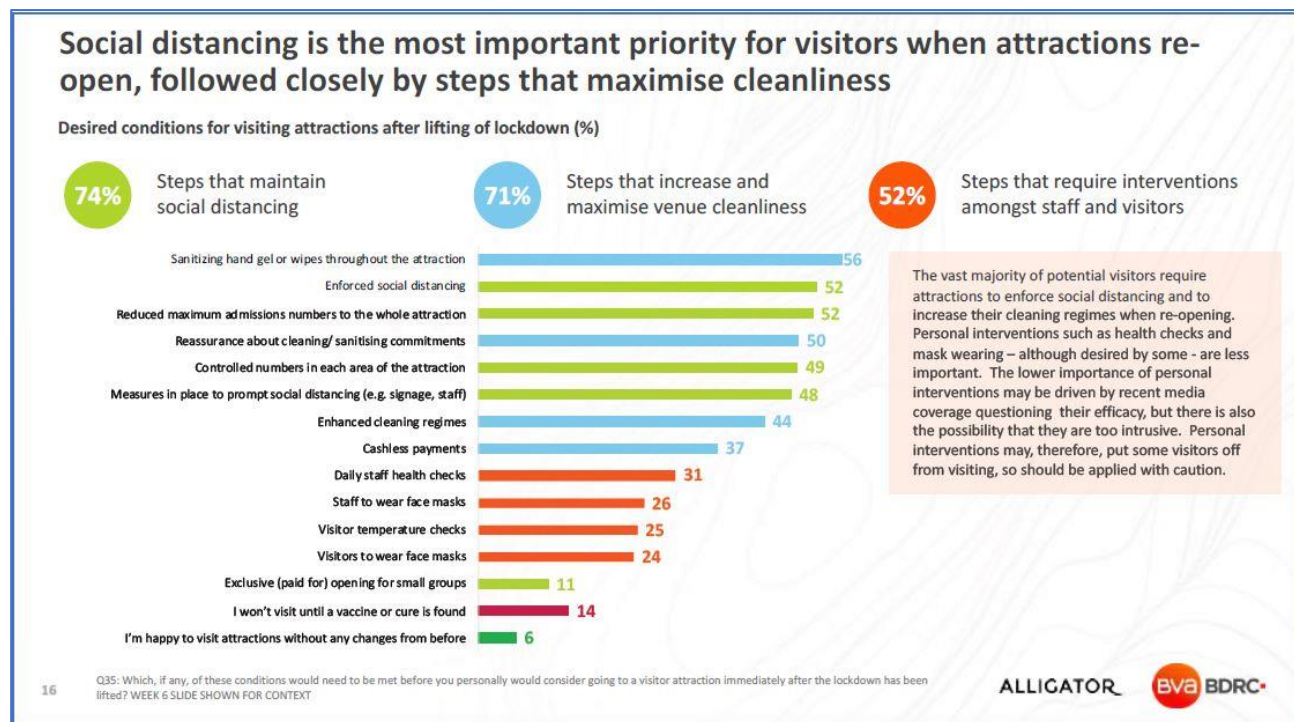


INTEREST IN DINING IN IS PREDICATED ON OUTDOOR SPACE & SOCIAL DISTANCING

While intention to return to dining out remains near-universal among our 'travel activist' sub-sample, the prospects for the restaurant sector over the summer are heavily predicated upon outdoor space and / or the ability to reassure through social distancing measures. Even among regular restaurant goers, there is little short-term appetite for dining inside or in spaces without social distancing measures.

3. Consumer Expectations on Safety/PPE:

Linked to the consumer sentiment tracker BVA/BDRC have also looked at consumer attitudes towards the external conditions that need to be met before returning. The table below is for visitor attractions, but the results are equally transferable to a town centre, retailer or other sales outlet.



The provision of tangible measures such as hand sanitiser and policies such as enforced social distancing are the most important to respondents. The above survey taken in early May we believe understates the acceptance of and demand for face masks, which have received much publicity over recent weeks and Government steer (albeit vague) on wearing them in public places and where 2m social distancing is challenging.

The most recent ONS survey on Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain¹ dated 29th May 2020 stated almost 3 in 10 adults (29%) have worn a face covering outside of their homes in the past seven days in order to slow the spread of the coronavirus. For those that had worn a face covering, the most common situation was whilst shopping (67%), followed by exercising outdoors and running errands (both 20%). Regardless of whether they had worn a face covering in the past, over 4 in 10 adults (41%) said they were either very or fairly likely to wear one in the next seven days.

The same ONS report also stated over 4 in 10 adults (42%) said they had visited a park or public green space this week. Of these, 36% said they had met up with friends or family from outside of their household. Across Great Britain, just under 3 in 10 adults (29%) said they felt unsafe or very unsafe when outside of their home which has decreased from 41% last week. At the time of the survey, lockdown restrictions had started to change in England. For those living in England, feelings of safety varied for different activities outside of the home. While over half of adults (55%) felt safe when meeting with someone outside of their household outdoors, this fell to around 1 in 3 who felt safe when visiting shops (37%).

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongreatbritain/29may2020>

The above, even in light of media images of crowds visiting tourist hotspots and beaches, show there is still a reticence to visit public spaces including shopping destinations by a significant proportion of the population.

In the context of Woking's recovery plan, consumer expectations that the town and wider Borough will need to be a **safe** place to live in, work in and to visit must remain paramount. Proactive measures need to be taken to achieve this, as well as ensuring such measures are visible and obvious to the resident, worker or visitor. The measures adopted must leave no question in their mind that Woking and the wider Borough care about their safety and are taking all practical and reasonable measures to ensure this. These physical and practical measures need to be underpinned by a parallel consumer information campaign with strong compelling messaging informing consumers that Woking has re-opened and is ready to safely welcome shoppers, workers and visitors alike.

4. Reopening High Streets Safely (ERDF) Fund

This £50m European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) was announced on Sunday 24th May, to support the safe reopening of high streets and other retail commercial areas. The funding will allow local authorities in England to put in place additional measures to establish a safe trading environment for businesses and customers, particularly in high streets, potentially up to end March 2021. Woking Borough Council was allocated **£89,721** from the fund.

What the fund can be utilised for has been clearly laid out in the Guidance Notes² the Fund will support four main strands of activity:

1. **Support to develop an action plan** for how the local authority may begin to safely reopen their local economies.
2. **Communications and public information activity** to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely.
3. **Business-facing awareness raising activities** to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely.
4. **Temporary public realm changes** to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely.

The Government fund guidance cross-references the High Streets Task Force's COVID-19 Recovery Framework, which underpins our report methodology. It should be noted that the allocated £89,721 funding can only be utilised to fund activities delivering the above strands. As this is ERDF sourced funding there is a separate reporting regime for all Reopening High Streets Safely Fund expenditure.

Updated Government guidance issued on 29th May has given additional activity eligibility information with specific reference to the requirements of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) where the Government has sourced this funding. It should be noted that the funding has to be claimed retrospectively and adhere to the precise requirements of the ERDF rules to prevent claim disallowance. We recommend that an officer is allocated the task of checking expenditure that you wish to claim for is ERDF eligible and that all

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reopening-high-streets-safely-fund-guidance>

the requirements such as use of ERDF logo are adhered to, required evidence is collected and retained should the EU managing authority undertake a retrospective audit.

5. Government Announcement 25th May reopening of non-essential retail

From 1st June Outdoor Markets and Car Showrooms are able to reopen, then from 15th June, other non-essential retail, ranging from department stores to small, independent shops, will be allowed to reopen.

Also On 25th May updated guidance for the retail sector detailing the measures they should take to meet the necessary social distancing and hygiene standards was published³. Shops will have limited the time to implement this guidance before they are allowed to reopen from 15th June.

6. Crisis Stage (we are now leaving)



We are undoubtedly exiting the current⁴ crisis stage, with daily Covid-19 cases and deaths starting to level and reduce. Woking Borough Council has been primarily focussing on supporting residents and vulnerable people, although support for the Borough's businesses and wider economy remains firmly in-scope. The Council has been actively supporting the Borough's businesses via a number of measures and initiatives throughout the Crisis Stage.

Core activities undertaken since lock-down:

- Distribution of Small Business Grant Fund, £10k & £25k grants to eligible businesses
- Processing business rate grants and relief for eligible Retail, Hospitality and Leisure businesses
- Discretionary top-up grants, awaiting final guidance from Government, WBC estimate £671k fund
- Opening dialogue with WBC commercial tenants experiencing income and cash-flow issues
- Liaison with Borough businesses experiencing hardship; giving advice guidance and signposting
- Signposting all businesses to Government support measures e.g. loans, furloughing, SEISS etc.
- Supporting easy access to the commercial centres and free parking during lock-down period
- Working with business organisations such as Woking Works, Chamber, FSB, Enterprise M3 etc.
- Sharing best-practice with other Surrey Authorities via twice weekly EDO virtual meeting
- Feeding into SCC wider Surrey County Recovery Plan and intelligence gathering
- Panel member on Surrey Chambers of Commerce recovery series of webinars
- Establishment of a Woking recovery plan initiative led by the Business Liaison Team

Additional activities undertaken over recent weeks:

- Series of webinars available to all Borough businesses to disseminate information, guidance and advice, first one on business support measures was released w/c 18th May.
- Bespoke research/intel into what key challenges face Borough businesses and the support needed via a targeted Survey Monkey surveys, first survey done w/c 11th May, results analysed.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches>

⁴ The Government have identified the high risk of a second wave of the Covid-19 outbreak if relaxation measures are not strictly managed

- Dialogue with Woking Borough Council Estates regarding potential rent support measures available to the tenants, meeting undertaken together with Woking Shopping representatives.
- Positive information piece on Covid-19 support and core re-opening messaging in next edition of Woking Magazine, publication date mid-June.
- Initial coordination, communication and engagement regarding the emerging recovery plan initiative across multiple internal and external partners including Environmental Health, Car-Parking, Neighbourhood Services, Communications, Estates, The Woking Works Partnership, Woking Shopping and Ardmore.⁵
- Initial Coordination, communication and engagement with appropriate Elected Members: Cllr Kevin Davis, Portfolio Holder for Promoting the Local Economy and Cllr Ian Johnson Chairman Economic Development Task Group. Weekly briefing meetings with both.

Final Steps – Crisis Stage

Ref:	Measure	Who	When	Outcome
CR01	Targeting remaining eligible businesses who have failed to claim their SBGF grants	Revenues & Benefits/Business Liaison, WW, Chamber, Partners	On-going	£1.51m unclaimed allocation as 21/06/20 granted to businesses
CR02	Launch of top-up discretionary grants. Promotion to businesses	Revenues & Benefits/Business Liaison, WW, Chamber, Partners	Early June	Allocated £671k top-up fund available for eligible businesses
CR03	Programme of WBC/WW support and webinars based around survey responses	Business Liaison/WW and partners	On-going	Dissemination of advice, guidance and best practice to businesses
CR04	Follow-up survey to monitor change and revised priorities for support	Business Liaison/WW and partners	Target w/c 8 th June 2020	Update survey results, help inform recovery actions

7. Pre-Recovery Stage (building capacity and planning for recovery)



We are now in this stage, where as well as dealing with the tail end of the crisis stage, we are planning for the recovery stage and future transformation stage. This is a critical stage where leaders and influencers need to come together to assess what our local economy could look like post-Covid-19, estimate the impacts of Covid-19 and start to map out the plans and actions needed to start the recovery stage. The human capacity and financial resources needed for the recovery stage need to be identified and allocated. This stage will be dependent on the guidance from Government within their recovery






⁵ Ardmore, marketing agency contracted by Woking Borough Council to deliver the #WeAreWoking brand.

strategy and roadmap for the relaxation of the lock-down, and for many business sectors the short to medium term guidance on social-distancing.

Core activities already undertaken within Pre-Recovery Stage

- Proposal to repurpose the Economic Development Task Group to form an Economic Recovery Task Group⁶
- Cllrs Davis and Cllr Johnson engaged with, and participated in weekly project briefings
- New Gov't plan to rebuild [‘The UK Government’s Covid-19 recovery strategy’](#) reviewed
- New Gov't Guidance on public realm [‘safer public spaces, urban centres and green spaces’](#) reviewed
- New Gov't Guidance on workplaces [‘working safely during coronavirus’](#) reviewed
- New Gov't Guidance on social distancing [‘staying alert and safe \(social distancing\)’](#) reviewed
- New Gov't Guidance on [‘Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do’](#) reviewed
- WBC Environmental Health engaged with and recovery planning discussed
- WBC Car-Parking and Neighbourhood Services engaged with and recovery planning discussed
- WBC Estates engaged with and recovery planning discussed
- WBC Communications engaged with and recovery planning discussed
- Woking Works members engaged with and recovery planning discussed
- Woking Shopping engaged with and recovery planning discussed
- Woking Business Advisor (consultant) re-engaged and supported first WW webinar
- First Woking Works business survey analysed and results used to inform future recovery activity
- B2B recovery marketing and communications planning undertaken with Woking Works
- B2C recovery marketing and communications planning undertaken with WBC Comms and Ardmore

The potential customer ‘journey’ from arrival in the town to departure from the town has been reviewed:

The Journey Component		Considerations
	Arrival in Town or Local Centre, parking, some requiring pay & display, most pay on exit	Signage, cleanliness, sanitisation, social distancing, positive promotional messaging
	Journey through WBC/SCC controlled public realm	Contract standards with Serco, cleanliness, sanitisation, social distancing, + messaging
	Through private ‘public’ realm e.g. shopping centre or privately owned spaces	Entrance sanitisation points, strict social distancing, cleanliness & hygiene regimes
	Shopping or services within private business premises	Individual businesses adherence to social distancing and in-store hygiene & PPE measures
	Departure from Town or Local Centre, most via pay on exit chip & pin pay machine	Return journey across public realm, pay on exit, chip & pin sanitisation, cleanliness of exit routes

The pre-recovery planning stage is well underway with a number of key actions already done or in-train.

⁶ Subject to Economic Development Task Group approval and revised terms of reference

Next Steps - Pre-Recovery Stage

Ref:	Measure	Who	When	Outcome
PR01	Ardmore B2C and Woking Works B2B comms plans reviewed and agreed	Business Liaison team, WBC Comms, Ardmore & Air Social	w/c 1 st June 2020	B2B & B2C comms plans agreed and incorporated in recovery framework
PR02	Internal and external consultation of this recovery framework document	Officers & ERTG Members, key strategic partners	June 2020	Feedback received and final draft document completed
PR03	Final draft recovery framework and plan reviewed by CMG	Officers & Members	w/c 1 st June 2020	Final agreed document published
PR04	Budget implications of recovery framework plan agreed by CMG	Officers & Members	w/c 8 th June 2020	Agreed budget allocated to relevant departments
PR05	Next live Woking Works webinar planned,	Business Liaison, WW and Woking Chamber	w/c 1 st June 2020	To engage with & inform businesses of the Borough's re-opening plan
PR06	Budget implications of recovery framework plan agreed by CMG	Officers & Members	w/c 15 th June 2020	Agreed budget allocated to relevant departments

8. Recovery Stage (unlocking, re-opening and getting people back)



This is to be a phased approach running in parallel with the Government's relaxation of the lock-down. Selected low-risk sectors will be unlocked first, such as non-essential retail in early June, with higher-risk sectors and leisure activities later on throughout the year, but no earlier than July. Social distancing measures will run parallel with unlocking, with the inherent impact on viability for some sectors such as food and beverage and entertainment. We currently can only make an educated guess of what the 'new normal' will be for the Borough's economy. The economic impact of Covid-19 and future changes to consumer behaviour will be key.

The following options listed below are thematically grouped and provide you with individual recommendations to consider within each broad theme. They have identified as being short, medium and long term, within the timelines listed below and they have been allocated to potential 'owner'. We have not been able to cost these within the time available relying on individual officers to update CMG on whether within or outside their current budgets or whether to be funded from the Government High Street re-opening safely fund. We have avoided listing recommendations that are excessive or will not directly address the wider recovery challenge.

Timelines:	S = Short	1-3 months	(Completed June/July/August)
	M= Medium	4-6 months	(Completed September/October/November)
	L= Long	+6 months	(December onwards)

REC01	Aim: Re-establish Woking's commercial centres as consumer destinations through messaging campaigns	Time -line	Who	Cost Source	
Links to ERDF High Street re-opening fund strand 2. Comms and public information activity					
REC01A	- Positive B2C messaging of Woking (and Borough) being safe to live in, work in and to visit	S/M	MarComms Ardmore	ERDF	
REC01B	- Campaign focus on Woking USPs, large public spaces, accessibility by car, cycle and on foot	S/M	MarComms Ardmore	ERDF	
REC01C	- B2C Marketing and promotion across multiple media types: social, online and physical	S/M	MarComms Ardmore	ERDF	
REC01D	- Utilisation of #WeAreWoking campaign, social media and website for primary messaging	S/M	MarComms Ardmore	ERDF	
REC01E	- Utilisation of Woking town Wi-Fi splash page and ability to message Wi-Fi users	S/M	MarComms Ardmore	ERDF	
REC01F	- Physical re-opening messaging throughout Borough; poster sites and car-park wrap-arounds	S/M	MarComms Ardmore	ERDF	
REC01G	- Utilisation of WBC Woking Magazine to promote positive B2C re-opening message	S/M	MarComms	ERDF	
REC01H	- Encourage consistent positive messaging across all partners: WBC, WW, Woking Shopping	S/M	MarComms	ERDF	
REC01I	- Sector specific B2C marketing when food and beverage sector is allowed to reopen with social distancing	M/L	MarComms Ardmore	ERDF	

REC02	Aim: To support the Boroughs SME businesses through transition from lock-down to re-opening	Time-line	Who	Cost Source	
Links to ERDF High Street re-opening fund strand 3. Business-facing awareness raising activities					
REC02A	- B2B messaging via Woking Works to engage with as many Borough businesses as possible	S/M	Business Liaison	£ n/a	
REC02B	- Ensuring all Government grants and support packages are promoted and signposted	S/M	Business Liaison	£ n/a	
REC02C	- WBC Advisor, WW partners, EM3 Growth Hub provide 1-2-1 business advice and guidance	S/M	Business Liaison	£ n/a	
REC02D	- Local targeted support packages and webinars to available to Borough Businesses	S/M	Business Liaison	£ n/a	
REC02E	- Promote Businesses listed in WW directory and the equivalent #WeAreWoking listing	S/M	Business Liaison	£ n/a	
REC02F	- Advise businesses their Google entries are up-to-date and reflect opening times and services (360° Maps)	S/M	Business Liaison	ERDF	
REC02G	- Review the need to assist/support with procurement (not provision) of PPE for smaller businesses	S/M	Business Liaison	ERDF	
REC02H	- Support package for food & beverage outlets, review of 'Best Bar None' see REC09	M/L	Business Liaison	ERDF	
REC02I	- Review assistance/packages available to help businesses develop an online presence e.g. near.st ⁷	M/L	Business Liaison	ERDF	
REC02J	- WBC Estates, open dialogue with WBC commercial tenants on a case by case basis	M/L	Estates	ERDF	
REC02K	- EHO advice and guidance for businesses, minimising need for enforcement	M/L	Environmental Health	ERDF	

REC03	Aim: Collect data and intelligence, reporting and analysis against pre-Covid	Time-line	Who	Cost Source	
Not eligible for ERDF High Street re-opening fund					
REC03A	- Foot-flow monitoring to measure recovery against historic datasets	S	Woking Shopping	£ n/a	
REC03B	- Analysis of car-parking data to measure recovery against historic datasets	S	N/hood Svc	£ n/a	
REC03C	- Use of Woking town Wi-Fi measured against historic datasets	S	Business Liaison	£ n/a	
REC03D	- Measurement of key outputs from B2B and B2C re-opening campaigns	M	MarComms Bus Liaison	£ n/a	
REC03E	- Continued promotion of wider surveys and commissioning of bespoke Woking surveys	M	Business Liaison	£ n/a	

⁷ Website portal for local businesses to sell their goods and services online. https://about.near.st/?utm_source=shops.near.st

REC04	Aim: Maximise the positive car-parking experience in WBC owned and operated car parks	Time-line	Who	Cost Source	
	Links to ERDF High Street re-opening fund strand 4. Temporary public realm changes				
REC04A	- Enhanced cleaning regime across all car-parks, management of Skanska contract	S	n/hood svcs	ERDF	
REC04B	- Visible sanitisation procedure for chip and pin payment machines and keypads	S	n/hood svcs	ERDF	
REC04C	- Review whether 'keep to left' needed in multi-storey stairwells and pinch points	S	n/hood svcs	ERDF	
REC04D	- Sanitisation, cleanliness and social distancing protocols with WBC owned and operated lifts	S	n/hood svcs	ERDF	
REC04E	- Review whether social distancing e.g. floor marking needed at busiest payment machines	S	n/hood svcs	ERDF	
REC04F	- Utilisation of poster and barrier wrap-around display space to reinforce B2B and B2C messaging	S	MarComms Bus Liaison	£ n/a	
REC04G	- Review whether installation of PPE/Sanitiser vending machines viable in car-parks	S	n/hood svcs	£ n/a	
REC04H	- Provision of contactless and mobile app payment systems in conjunction with ongoing system procurement.	L	n/hood svcs	Future Procurement	
REC04I	- Date of reintroduction of car parking charges across WBC car-parks – July 2020	S	CMG	£ n/a	

REC05	Aim: To create a safe, positive environment within public realm in WBC control	Time-line	Who	Cost Source	
	Links to High Street re-opening fund strand 4. Temporary public realm changes Not eligible for ERDF High Street re-opening fund				
REC05A	- Enhanced cleansing regime across all public realm, management of Serco contract	S	n/hood svcs	£ n/a	
REC05B	- Visible bin sanitisation and rubbish bag emptying procedure for WBC litter bins	S	n/hood svcs	£ n/a	
REC05C	- Enhanced cleaning/sanitisation and entry/exit management of WBC public toilets	S	n/hood svcs	£ n/a	
REC05D	- Review whether social distancing measures needed for queues extending into public realm	S	n/hood svcs	£ n/a	
REC05E	- Specific distancing measures for public transport queues; bus, rail and taxi points	S	n/hood svcs	£ n/a	
REC05F	- Review whether 'keep to the left' distancing needed at narrow pinch points	S	n/hood svcs	£ n/a	
REC05G	- Review of street furniture, especially seating to achieve social distancing	S	n/hood svcs	£ n/a	
REC05H	- Utilisation of signage, poster and wrap-around display spaces to reinforce B2C messaging	S	n/hood svcs	£ n/a	
REC05I	- WBC Enforcement Officers, enhanced training on social distancing and enforcement	S	n/hood svcs	£ n/a	

REC05J	- Review whether installation of PPE/Sanitiser vending machines viable in public realm	M	n/hood svcs	£ n/a	
REC05K	- Review Gov't new guidance on post-Covid-19 public realm with regard to extension of pedestrian only areas.	L	n/hood svcs	£ n/a	
REC05L	- Review Gov't new guidance on post-Covid-19 public realm with regard to widening of pavements	L	n/hood svcs	£ n/a	

REC06	Aim: to create a safe positive public realm within private control e.g. shopping centres	Time-line	Who	Cost Source	
	Not eligible for ERDF High Street re-opening fund				
REC06A	- Enhanced cleansing regime across all public areas, management of contract	S	Estates/Wok Shopping	£ n/a	
REC06B	- Enhanced cleaning/sanitisation and entry/exit management of public toilets	S	Estates/Wok Shopping	£ n/a	
REC06C	- Sanitiser gel stations on all main entrances to the centres	S	Estates/Wok Shopping	£ n/a	
REC06D	- Visible bin sanitisation and rubbish bag emptying procedure	S	Estates/Wok Shopping	£ n/a	
REC06E	- One-way system for walkways to maximise social distancing	S	Estates/Wok Shopping	£ n/a	
REC06F	- Social distancing measures for shop unit queues extending beyond their frontage	S	Estates/Wok Shopping	£ n/a	
REC06G	- Review seating throughout centres to achieve social distancing	S	Estates/Wok Shopping	£ n/a	
REC06H	- Review of WS Food Court seating and queue management	S	Estates/Wok Shopping	£ n/a	
REC06I	- Security and cleaning staff, enhanced training on social distancing and enforcement	S	Estates/Wok Shopping	£ n/a	
REC06J	- Utilisation of digital screens, poster spaces and floor stickers to reinforce B2C messaging	S	Estates/Wok Shopping	£ n/a	
REC06K	- Review 'virtual queuing' mobile app being developed for Asda ⁸	M	Estates/Wok Shopping	£ n/a	
REC06L	- Shared intelligence from tenant/occupier surveys and feedback	M	Estates/Wok Shopping	£ n/a	
REC06M	- Review installation of PPE/Sanitiser vending machines (masks, gloves etc.) at entry points	M	Estates/Wok Shopping	£ n/a	
REC06N	- Review of disinfection and fogging, whether safe and practical for regular use	M	Estates/Wok Shopping	£ n/a	

⁸ <https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-asda-trials-virtual-queuing-as-it-plans-for-longer-term-social-distancing-11991278>

REC07	Aim: Review Borough's Arts, Culture and Leisure provision post-Covid-19	Time-line	Who	Cost Source
Not eligible for ERDF High Street re-opening fund				
REC07A	- Review Celebrate Woking programme scheduled commencement in light of Government guidance	L	Business Liaison	£ n/a
REC07B	- Liaison with leisure providers to align with B2C re-opening campaign when allowed	M	Community services	£ n/a

REC08	Aim: Engagement with Borough office occupiers and their employees	Time-line	Who	Cost Source
Not all directly eligible for ERDF High Street re-opening fund				
REC08A	- Business Liaison engagement with Borough key office occupiers	S	Bus Liaison /Estates	£ n/a
REC08B	- Intelligence on social distancing and revised level of occupation	S	Estates	£ n/a
REC08C	- Positive messaging to employees returning to work within Borough centres	S	Bus Liaison /MarComms	ERDF
REC08D	- Promotion of accessibility via car, cycle and walking	M	Bus Liaison/ MarComms	£ n/a

REC09	Aim: Engagement with Borough food & beverage operators with a view to minimise business failures	Time-line	Who	Cost Source
Links to ERDF High Street re-opening fund strand 3. Business-facing awareness raising activities				
REC09A	- Engagement with businesses within the food and beverage, hospitality and accommodation sectors	S	Business Liaison	ERDF
REC09B	- Bespoke B2B support packages for the sectors including advice, guidance and signposting	S	Business Liaison	ERDF
REC09C	- Positive B2C messaging when sector allowed to re-open, with social distancing measures	M	MarComms Ardmore	ERDF
REC09D	- Review Best-Bar- None initiative for restaurants, public houses and bars, relaunch of scheme	L	Business Liaison	£ TBC

9. Transformation (cross-cutting but mainly post recovery)

Transformation
Supporting place leaders to transform their high streets



Strong partnerships



Funding / Investment



Delivering the vision

Although the final stage, this in reality will cut-across all stages of the framework, as we collectively need to start considering the transformation of our commercial centres from this point onwards. Pre-Covid-19 there was considerable attention being given to the demise of the 'High Street', especially in light of the exponential rise of online retailing.

Working through significant investment in the town centre, acquisition of key assets, attracting key occupiers, improvement of the food and beverage offer, a proactive event programme, experiential content management and effectively building its own town centre customer

base through residential development, has managed to lessen the impact of the structural change to consumer behaviour. This notwithstanding the lasting impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, both economically and through changes in consumer attitude need consideration within the wider recovery plan:

TR01	Aim: Regeneration of the Borough's commercial centres	Time-line
TR01A	- Maintaining ambitious regeneration and development plans for Woking and Borough	L
TR01B	- Review of the planned retail, hospitality and residential mix in light of Covid-19	L
TR01C	- Continued acquisition of key sites across the Borough for redevelopment	L
TR01D	- Lobbying Government for PWLB flexibility in light of Covid-19	L
TR01E	- Continued development of Borough cycling and walking accessibility infrastructure	L
TR01F	- Accelerated introduction of dedicated parking and charging points for e-vehicles & e-bikes	L

TR02	Aim: Help Borough businesses with resilience planning	Time-line
TR02A	- Removed see Appendix	
TR02B	- Development of on-line digital 'clicks' presence in addition to physical 'bricks' presence	L
TR02C	- Assist businesses with advice on resilience planning, the next Covid-19	L

TR03	Aim: Attract Inward Investment into the Borough	Time-line
TR03A	- Review future uses of premises vacated through post-Covid business failure	L
TR03B	- Review viability of shared-service units for micro independents and artisans	L
TR03C	- Review Inward Investment proposition to occupiers seeking lower premises cost	L
TR03D	- Promotion of local employment opportunities vs. outbound commuting. 'Live and work'	L
TR03E	- Continued research and intelligence gathering on occupation trends and demand	L

TR04	Aim: Position Woking as a multi-service 'destination'	Time-line
TR04A	- Review the 'Place Making' agenda and previous 'Destination Woking' plans in light of Covid-19 crisis	L
TR04B	- Review the town in terms of a multi-service 'destination' across retail, leisure and employment	L

Appendix A – Brief for Ardmore⁹

Woking Re-Opening – Marketing Brief: 13/05/2020

Key message:

Woking is re-opening/re-opened* as a safe place: to shop, to work, and to visit.

*depending on timing of messaging

Audiences:

Mainly business/place to consumer, but there are subsectors within this:

- Consumers coming for shopping, services and leisure, residents within the Borough
- Consumers/visitors for shopping services and leisure, from outside the Borough
- Workers returning to their places of work, although they are consumers as well
- Commuters utilising the transport node, passing through, but again are consumers

We delineate slightly between residents and non-residents as we anticipate the messaging may need to be nuanced in terms of residents returning to and supporting their local town centre vs. consumers from outside Borough with potentially less affiliation with the town and greater pull from competing centres also re-opening. Also WBC communications will have been in touch with residents throughout the lock-down, maintaining key messaging.

The Business to Business messaging is anticipated to be mainly achieved via the Woking Works partnership and partners. In terms of support for Borough businesses to re-open etc.

A strong consumer message that Woking Borough is re-opening and safe will also present positive picture to businesses/employers based within the town in terms of encouraging back their employees to work and longer-term may assist with wider inward investment messaging.

External Considerations:

The campaign needs to closely adhere to the Government's "OUR PLAN TO REBUILD: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy" [Link](#)

Plus latest supplemental Gov't guidance issued such as:

- Staying alert and safe (social distancing) [link](#)
- Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do [link](#)

Key Partners for consistent messaging:

- Woking Borough Council, via Ardmore and the #WEAREWOKING B2C site
- Woking Shopping (Peacocks and Wolsey Place) via the Woking Shopping B2C site
- Woking Works (primarily B2C messaging and support) via the Woking Works B2B site
- Any major advertisers based in Woking, mirror/piggyback our key messages
- Representatives from larger secondary/tertiary centres, local promotion

⁹ Ardmore, advertising and marketing agency retained by WBC

Woking (Borough) Recovery Project Scope:

We are primarily looking at the Woking Town Centre, but we need the project to include the secondary centres including Brookwood, Byfleet, West Byfleet, Hook Heath, Pyrford, Knaphill, Maybury, Mayford, Kingsfield, Old Woking, St. Johns, Sheerwater, Horsell and Westfield.

- From arrival into the town/centres, any positive messaging needed on arrival, poster/billboards etc.
- Car-parking, positive messaging and hygiene/cleanliness of parking infrastructure
- Public transport nodal points, likely to be within WBC public realm as below
- Footpath/Cycle-path network, also within WBC public realm as below
- Public realm under WBC control, high standards, visibility & profile of Serco operatives etc.
- Public realm under private control (Woking Shopping), hygiene/cleanliness measures throughout
- Individual A1 Shops, A2 establishments & A3 when allowed, localised measures within premises
- Other services being accessed, Council, Library, Arts & Leisure, professional services
- Employees working within the town centre, same as above but for work

Questions:

- What should such re-opening/re-launch a campaign consist of?
- Social media, if so which and how?
- Role of high profile influencers and ambassadors?
- Other media to consider, newspapers (WN&M), magazines, local publications etc.?
- Local radio stations?
- Signage, billboard, poster and banner sites, both local and further afield?
- Bus advertising?
- Google, Facebook pay per click advertising?
- Google business entries, opening times, reviews etc.
- #WEAREWOKING as primary B2C website and message identifier?
- #WEAREWOKING information portal for B2C businesses within the Borough
- Promotion of new information such as business re-opening, special offers etc.
- Cross-cutting consistent messaging across all key Woking websites?
- Linkage to Woking free wi-fi splash page?
- E-campaigns via partners or GDPR compatible databases?
- New messaging such as #welcomebacktowoking, #safeshoppingwoking, #safe Woking?
- Timeframes, from June relaxation onwards to maybe Christmas, message phasing?
- Phased opening of some (higher-risk) sectors such as F&B sector later in year?
- Cancellation and postponement of Celebrate Woking events, re-formatting, re-scheduling?
- The 'new normal' in terms of social distancing, transformation of business processes?
- Alignment with Gov't messaging as it develops along the 'roadmap to recovery'
- Budget required for the project, from where?

Next Steps

Propose a Zoom meeting as soon as some thoughts have been given to the above?

Participants: Andy Denner, Chris Norrington, Simon Matthews, + others?

SCM/13052020

Appendix B – B2C Proposal from Ardmore



#WeAreWoking – B2C recovery framework

Campaign Objective – What are we working to achieve?		
<p>Rebuild the confidence of Woking residents, commuters and visitors in line with the government's phased recovery plan. Ensure we are staying connected with as many people as possible – using all through-the-line channels to broadcast key information on progress.</p>		
Messaging strategy – what we are going to say		
<p>Leverage the brand equity and empathetic tone of the #WeAreWoking initiative to keep people who live, work, visit and socialise in the borough...</p>		
<p>1. Safe – delivering key operational information on measures being taken by the council to ensure the safety of everyone</p>	<p>2. Informed – updating people on progress of phased recovery and new developments through agile, templated advertising assets</p>	<p>3. Positive – maintaining a stream of positive and optimistic news and stories to support the functional and informative updates on progress</p>
Media strategy – how we are going to reach people		
<p>The below showcases the media channels and platforms at our disposal. Categorized under Paid, Owned and Earned, we must ensure the right message is delivered on the right medium.</p> <p>Paid channels will always deliver reach at scale however Owned and Earned channels are traditionally more trusted, authoritative sources (especially during times of national crisis). These core strengths must be a key consideration in determining what we say where.</p>		
Paid Advertising channels	Owned Advertising channels	Earned Advertising channels
<p>Any advertising that you pay for. Traditionally this would include TV adverts, radio spots, and print advertising.</p>	<p>The content you create and publish on a channel you own. This includes your website and your social media channels.</p>	<p>All content and conversation that has been created and published somewhere other than your owned channels.</p>
Paid Social	We Are Woking Website	PR comms
<p>Key for hyper targeting multiple messages to Woking and surrounding Borough areas quickly.</p> <p>Furthermore, a variety of different messaging will be used to ensure relevancy to target audiences.</p> <p>Council PSA assets will be repurposed for social optimisation and targeted to consumers.</p>	<p>Continue to add new articles to Woking Together section of website (minimum 3 per week) – include regular updates on latest govt. advice and community support.</p> <p>Create a webpage with list of businesses who have reopened. Link in with activity from Working Works.</p>	<p>Create a continually updated shared bank of news hooks – preopening and official opening plans for retail, services, and leisure.</p> <p>Regularly liaise with Woking Works, WBC, and Woking Shopping to identify priority themes & news hooks (and advise on photography requirements).</p> <p>Create an agreed PR template for news stories which incorporates all</p>



		<p>agreed messaging, advice, quotes, and information/signposting.</p> <p>Create best practice examples for safe, managed, successful openings.</p> <p>Pitch relevant, priority news stories and features to key local, regional and trade media.</p> <p>Provide relevant news story focus on areas identified outside Woking Town Centre.</p>
<p>Digital display (programmatic)</p>	<p>#WAW Wi-Fi / E-mailers</p>	<p>Social media conversation</p>
<p>Banner advertising will be used to target Woking, West Byfleet, Knaphill, Old Woking, St Johns, Horsell & Westfield.</p> <p>Banner advertising will be shown on websites frequented by our target audience and guide them toward the campaign landing page.</p> <p>As a digital format this will allow for quick and flexible messaging.</p>	<p>2 x monthly e-mail campaigns will continue to raise awareness of key updates.</p> <p>Update Wi-Fi portal splash page and thank you e-mail to remind people of social distancing guidelines.</p>	<p>Daily monitoring of the #WeAreWoking hashtag and social tags across all social channels and sharing of posts when appropriate.</p> <p>Encouraging the use of the hashtag in posts to increase engagement</p> <p>Monitoring of the hello@wearewoking.com email address and sharing received content</p>
<p>Outdoor</p>	<p>#WAW Facebook</p>	
<p>This will be used as trigger point messaging to empathise with the local community.</p> <p>48 sheets, bus rears, 6 sheets and digital kiosks have already been agreed and will be used to convey reassuring messages in Woking itself and surrounding areas.</p>	<p>Continue to share all website updates and key stories collated from the community.</p> <p>Sharing 3 – 4 posts a week, ranging from govt. guidelines to positive news including Top Tips and how to get involved.</p>	<p>Additionally, we would recommend implementing a Social Listening Tool in order to delve deeper into the use of the hashtag and analyse campaign sentiment.</p>
<p>Press advertising</p>	<p>#WAW Instagram</p>	
<p>Full page advertorials will be used to convey a depth of useful information to our older demographic who will need more information in order to change their perception.</p>	<p>Continue to share User Generated Content and use Instagram as a hub for positive stories and imagery, encouraging use of the #WeAreWoking hashtag to join the conversation.</p> <p>Sharing 3 – 4 posts a week including management of Instagram Story and hashtag mentions.</p>	<p>Social Listening can be used for the various accounts – Woking Shopping, Working Works and Woking Council; in order for us to gain a bigger picture and detailed, valuable consumer insights.</p>



<p>These will run across Woking News and Mail and Surrey Advertiser Series.</p>		
<p>Radio/Audio</p>	<p>#WAW Twitter</p>	
<p>Eagle Radio will continue to be used as a trusted voice during this pandemic.</p>	<p>Continue to post regular tweets daily, including retweeting of specific Woking Council updates and shareholder communications. Given the speed of updates, Twitter will be primarily used to reshare content. Tweets will include updates from local businesses such as reopening news in line with Woking Works activity</p>	
<p>40" spots will be used in order to deliver information.</p>	<p>#WAW LinkedIn</p>	
	<p>Sharing 3 – 4 posts a week with a focus on specific business-related news and updates, targeting local businesses. Posts will also include any key development updates and progress.</p>	

Appendix C – B2B Proposal from Air Social¹⁰

Woking's Business Recovery and Action Plan

Following the completion of the recent discovery session into how we can best support Woking business in the coming months by accelerating the messaging through social media platforms and Woking Works website predominately between June, July and August 2020. This plan will allow us to support businesses through the crisis by informing them of the support available from Woking Works and its partners. In addition the campaign will expand its reach beyond Woking for part three to target businesses that have the potential to move their businesses to Woking.

Part 1

Increase the membership of the business directory

Targeted digital advertising will be used to achieve this objective through LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook & Instagram. We will reach all the businesses in Woking by identifying them on these platforms.

There will be a three stepped approach with how adverts are served to each audience.

Advert 1 - Who are Woking Works and its partners - how can it help your business??

Advert 2 - Sign Up to the Directory

Advert 2 - Information about Woking Works and its directory members (offers etc)

Advert 3 - Podcasts past and present (either listen back or encouraged to join the next one)

Advert 4 - Podcast attendance sign ups

Part 2

Engage with directory members

There will be a repeat each month to the targeted advertising but with additional adverts set up with new information provided. The purpose of repeating Part 1 in Part 2, is to ensure that as many businesses as possible understand what Woking Works and its partners can do to support them through crisis and recovery.

Advert 1 - Who are Woking Works and its partners - how can it help your business??

Advert 2 - Sign Up to the Directory

Advert 3 - Information about Woking Works and its directory members (offers etc.)

Advert 4 - Podcasts past and present (either listen back or encouraged to join the next one)

Advert 5 - Podcast attendance sign ups

Additional Adverts to Part 1:

Advert 6 - The latest changes from the government

Advert 7 - A selection of the latest member's profiles advertised

Advert 8 - A selection of Woking Business Offers

Advert 9 - Promoted communication to Woking businesses that have signed up

Advert 10 - (Visit our partner sites for Information about Woking Shopping & lifestyle)

Part 3

Inward Investment

We will proactively be targeting businesses outside of Woking Borough to encourage them to move their business to Woking by showcasing the support network and available premises.

Adverts carried forward from part 1 & 2:

Advert 4 - Podcasts past and present (either listen back or encouraged to join the next one)

Advert 5 - Podcast attendance sign ups

Advert 6 - The latest changes from the government

¹⁰ Social media advertising and marketing agency providing services to Woking Works

- Advert 7 - A selection of the latest member's profiles advertised
- Advert 8 - A selection of Woking Business Offers
- Advert 9 - Promoted communication to Woking businesses that have signed up
- Advert 10 - (Visit our partner sites for Information about Woking Shopping & lifestyle)

Additional Programmed adverts

- Advert 11 - Woking Office Premises
- Advert 12 - Showcasing Woking Businesses
- Advert 13 - Highlights of being a Woking business
- Advert 14 - Woking as a business destination

Here are some of the audiences we will be targeting and engagement with during the campaign:

LinkedIn

Audience 1

Small Business Owners

- Recently or Live In Woking
- Job Titles: Small business manager, business manager, senior business manager, branch manager, small business owner, owner, independent business owner, founder, co-founder, director, managing director, executive director, chief executive officer, president, co-owner, franchise owner, shop owner, salon owner, agency owner, restaurant owner, store owner, managing owner, joint owner, independent owner.

Total: 4,800 Users

Audience 2

Small Businesses (KDM's)

- Recently or Live In Woking
- Job Seniority: Partner, Owner, CXO, VP, Director, Manager, Senior
- Company Size: 1-50 employees

Total: 3,600 Users

Audience 3

Self-Employed

- Recently or Live In Woking
- Company Size: 1

Total: 340 Users

Twitter

Audience 1

Woking Small Business

- Keywords/Interests: Small business, Woking Small Business
- Follower lookalikes: @WokingCouncil, @WokingWorks, @WeAreWoking

Total: 10,700 Users

Appendix D - Utilisation of public realm for additional seating and units

The potential to utilise space within the public realm to extend food & beverage seating thus facilitating social distancing rules has been discussed as an option to consider:

See Appendix G this recommendation REC05N was removed following CMG review.

Campaign to make public spaces available to hospitality launched

By Joe Lutrario

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RELATED TAGS: Coronavirus, UnitedWeStand, Pubs, Casual dining

A campaign has been launched to safely re-start the UK hospitality industry by transforming public spaces and streets into al fresco dining spaces whilst adhering to physical distancing.

Alan Lorrimer, founder of live music venues The Piano Works, is asking operators nationwide to support the UK Grand Outdoor Café campaign, which is calling on the government to issue a directive to grant local authorities a temporary deregulation to allow tables and chairs outside existing hospitality businesses.

The idea is similar to an initiative in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius, which has temporarily given public spaces to its restaurants and bars to help them comply with physical distancing rules.

UK Grand Outdoor Café will also have a fundraising element that will allow the public to purchase food and drink vouchers for frontline workers that can be used at UK Grand Outdoor Café venues.

The campaign plans to request that operators be allowed the flexibility to extend their current licensing conditions and trading hours with no additional fees charged alongside the relaxing of zoning regulations until September in order for selected spaces to become designated pedestrianised zones.

Operators that have shown their support include The Breakfast Club, St Austell Brewery, Albion and East, Corazon and Poppies but Lorrimer says the campaign will need more wide-reaching support to get government buy in.

Lorrimer says that many restaurants, cafes and bar operators will struggle to survive if they re-open with reduced capacity due to physical distancing regulations.

"We have two hitherto successful 400 capacity late night, non-stop, audience requested, live music venues The Piano Works in Farringdon and the West End, and at present we are totally dependent on the Government for our survival," says Lorrimer.

"They've done an amazing job of furloughing our 130 staff, removing rates for a year, delaying VAT payments, and guaranteeing a business loan. But how do we start paying them back if we can't physically distance our guests, how do we say thank you to our frontline heroes and to the public who have behaved so responsibly."

Operators are invited to go to www.UKGSOC.org to read the full proposal and register their interest in supporting the campaign.



Appendix E: Web links

Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery Strategy

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884760/Our_plan_to_rebuild_The_UK_Government_s_COVID-19_recovery_strategy.pdf

New Gov't Guidance on public realm '[safer public spaces, urban centres and green spaces](#)'

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safer-public-places-urban-centres-and-green-spaces-covid-19>

New Gov't Guidance on workplaces '[working safely during coronavirus](#)'

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

New Gov't Guidance on social distancing '[staying alert and safe \(social distancing\)](#)'

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>

New Gov't Guidance on '[Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do](#)'

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

Review assistance/packages available to help businesses develop an online presence e.g. [near.st](#)

<https://near.st>

Reopening High Streets Safely Fund

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888818/Reopening_High_Streets_Safely_Fund_-_Guidance_-_Final_v2.pdf

Appendix F: Key Internal Partners & Contractors

Delivery Partners – Draft

Officers

Woking Borough Council – Business Liaison Manager (Chris Norrington)
Woking Works and Partners Lead - (Chris Norrington)
Woking Borough Council – Estates (Ian Tomes)
Woking Shopping – J-P Jackson & Rowen de Grauw
Woking Borough Council – Director of Neighbourhood Services (Geoff McManus)
Woking Borough Council – Environmental Health (Emma Bourne)
Woking Borough Council – Car Parking (Ian Reynolds)
Woking Borough Council – Neighbourhood Management (Andy Calfe)
Woking Borough Council – Director of Community Services (Julie Fisher)
Woking Borough Council – Leisure, Culture & Arts (Steve May)
Woking Borough Council – Marketing & Communications (Andy Denner)
Woking Borough Council – Portfolio Holder for Promoting the local Economy – (Cllr Kevin Davis)
Woking Borough Council – Economic Recovery Task Group (Cllr Ian Johnson)

West Byfleet Representative (Cllr. Gary Elson)

Contractors

Ardmore (B2C) (Contact TBC)
Air Social (B2B) (Alex Vinall)
Google 360° maps agent (Simon Sadek)
Matthews Associates (UK) Ltd (Simon Matthews)

EXECUTIVE – 16 JULY 2020

THE BUSINESS AND PLANNING BILL

Executive Summary

The Business and Planning Bill (the Bill) is being introduced to make provision in respect of the promotion of economic recovery and growth. It notably, amongst other matters, provides for pavement licences and off sales of alcohol. This report is in respect of the sections of the Bill for which authority needs to be delegated to officers.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) the Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to determine pavement licences;
- (ii) the Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to approve the conditions attached to pavement licences; and
- (iii) the Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to undertake enforcement action in accordance with s6 of the Business and Planning Bill or such section as enacted.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To allow the effective determination and enforcement of pavement licences within the Borough.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers: [The Business and Planning Bill](#)

Reporting Person: Peter Bryant, Director of Legal and Democratic Services
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Portfolio Holder: Councillor Debbie Harlow
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Shadow Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ken Howard
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Date Published: 8 July 2020

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Bill introduces a new legal framework for issuing pavement licences, which will enable food and drink businesses to put removable furniture on the pavement adjacent to their premises in order to sell or serve food and drink, or for people to sit at to consume food and drink. The framework supersedes the existing framework for pavement licensing set out in the Highways Act 1980, but does not impact licences already issued under that Act. It should be noted that the Bill does not allow anyone who does not already have a licence to sell alcohol to do so but allows premises to extend onto the pavements to sell or serve food and drink.
- 1.2 As at the date of writing this report, the Business and Planning Bill (the Bill) has not become law. The Bill was initially expected to become law before the pubs reopened on 4 July 2020. It is now anticipated that the Bill shall become law towards the end of July.

2.0 Pavement Licences

- 2.1 The Council will be required to process applications for pavement licences within two weeks, and a maximum fee of £100 will be payable. Each application will be subject to a seven-day consultation period, with any representations required to be considered in determining the application. The consultation process requires the applicant to display a notice of the application at the premises and the Highways Authority must be consulted. The Portfolio Holder and Ward Members will also be consulted. Licences must be for a minimum of three months and can run for any period up to an end date of 30 September 2021.
- 2.2 It is important to note that where a council does not respond to an application within two weeks, a licence will be deemed to have been granted for a year from the date of the deemed determination or 30 September 2021, whichever is the sooner. For this reason, it is important that delegations are in place to reduce the risk of deemed licences as a result of non-determination.
- 2.3 Both councils and the Secretary of State may issue conditions in relation to pavement licences: where licence conditions are breached, the council can serve an improvement notice or revoke the licence.
- 2.4 In implementing the new framework, councils will need to manage a number of potentially conflicting objectives including the need for businesses to reopen and the desire of customers to begin socialising again; the need to maintain accessibility of the highways for all users, and the possible concerns of local residents living in areas that may be affected by the extension in businesses operating outside.
- 2.5 The council can reject licence applications or revoke licences if circumstances mean that this cannot be managed safely or without causing significant detriment to residents. The relaxation of these rules will require individual business owners, local trade groups and the police to work together alongside councils, as well as responsible behaviour by customers.

3.0 Procedure

- 3.1 The Council has been supporting local hospitality businesses to reopen safely. An application process is now in place and is ready to go live once the Bill becomes law.
- 3.2 The Council has put in place a two stage procedure to ensure good internal governance. The application shall be processed by the Town Centre Highways Team who report to the Director of Neighbourhood Services. They will undertake the prescribed consultation process and consider any responses received. They will also need to work closely with Environmental Health to ensure any application submitted complies with the COVID 19

regulations. They shall make a formal recommendation to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services who shall determine the application.

- 3.3 It is proposed that the maximum fee of £100 shall be levied for consideration of the application. Each application shall be considered upon its own merits however initially it is anticipated that a 3 month pavement licence shall be issued to cover the summer period.
- 3.4 The Council shall issue pavement licences subject to its current set of conditions for the same under the Highways Act. These shall be amended to incorporate any national conditions imposed by central government or local conditions as appropriate. These conditions include, but are not limited to, the following:-
- a. Third Party Insurance cover from a reputable company at a minimum level of £5 million;
 - b. There must be a clear route of access along the highway taking into account accessibility of disabled people and the recommended minimum footway width and distances required for access by mobility impaired and visually impaired people;
 - c. Tables and chairs will be of an approved type and kept in a good state of repair. The seating area shall be clearly delineated and the furniture shall be removed when not in use and when the premise is closed for business;
 - d. The pavement licensee shall ensure that they operate in a safe manner and comply with current COVID 19 regulations and guidance; and
 - e. Where appropriate shall provide for the use of plastic glasses and containers.
- 3.5 It is requested that authority be delegated to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to determine the conditions to be attached to the pavement licences.

4.0 Enforcement

- 4.1 If a condition imposed on a licence is breached the Council will be able to issue a notice requiring the breach to be remedied and the Council can take action to cover any costs incurred to remedy the breach. The Council may revoke a licence in the following circumstances:

For breach of condition, (whether or not a remediation notice has been issued) or where:

- There are risks to public health or safety – for example by encouraging users to breach government guidance on social distancing by placing tables and chairs too close together;
 - the highway is being obstructed (other than by anything permitted by the licence);
 - there is anti-social behaviour or public nuisance – for example, the use is increasing the amount of noise generated late at night and litter is not being cleaned up;
 - it comes to light that the applicant provided false or misleading statements in their application – for example they are operating a stall selling hot food and had applied for tables and chairs on which drinks could be consumed; or
 - the applicant did not comply with the requirement to affix the notice to notify the public for the relevant period.
- 4.2 The Council may also revoke the licence where all or any part of the area of the relevant highway to which the licence relates has become unsuitable for any purpose for which the

licence was granted or deemed to be granted. For example, the licensed area (or road adjacent) is no longer to be pedestrianised. It is requested that authority be delegated to the Director of Legal and Democratic services to undertake the abovementioned enforcement.

5.0 Off Sales

- 5.1 The Bill will also amend the Licensing Act 2003 so that any premises with licences which currently only permit drinks to be consumed on the premises will be permitted to allow sales for consumption off the premises. The default extension will not however apply to premises which in the last three years have been refused permission for an off-sales licence, or have had this permission revoked. The draft Bill only lists premises licences not club premises certificates therefore it is not anticipated that the automatic entitlement to off sales shall apply to clubs or anything with a club licence such as a Working Man's Club.

6.0 Implications

Financial

- 6.1 Pavement licences are presently granted under Part 7A of the Highways Act 1980. The licence fee differs from licence to licence but is usually greater than £100. The new process provides a cheaper, easier and quicker way for businesses to obtain a licence. It is anticipated that current licence holders may request a refund of their existing licence fee and will use this regime in future applications paying the lower fee.

Human Resource/Training and Development

- 6.2 Inevitably there will be additional demands on officer time which shall be met from existing resources.

Community Safety

- 6.3 Community safety shall be considered in the application process.

Risk Management

- 6.4 The application for a pavement licence must be determined within 14 days. If it is not, by default, a licence is granted until September 2021. For this reason, delegated authority has been requested to allow applications to be determined within the requisite timeframe.

Sustainability

- 6.5 None identified in the report.

Equalities

- 6.7 Accessibility shall be considered in the application process. It is a condition of any pavement licence that clear routes of access along the highway must be maintained, taking into account the needs of disabled people, and the recommended minimum footway widths and distances required for access by mobility impaired and visually impaired people.

Safeguarding

- 6.8 None identified in the report.

REPORT ENDS

EXECUTIVE – 16 JULY 2020

EQUALITIES ANNUAL REPORT - 2020

Executive Summary

This annual report seeks to inform the Executive of progress on the equalities agenda. It covers the period April 2019 to March 2020. The Equality Act 2010 brought together, harmonised and in some cases extended previous equality law. The aim of the legislation is to make it more consistent, clearer and easier to follow in order to make society fairer. The Act also sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on 5 April 2011. The Equality Duty ensures that all public bodies, including local authorities, play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all.

The Equality Duty covers the following protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Duty requires the Council to have 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Having 'due regard' means consciously thinking about the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision making. This means that consideration of equality issues must influence the decisions reached by the Council, e.g. how it acts as an employer, how it develops, evaluates and reviews policies, how it designs, delivers and evaluates services and how it commissions and procures from others.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

the report be received.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To meet the requirement to report on annual progress on the equality agenda.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers: [Corporate Equality Scheme](#)
Sustainability Impact Assessment
Equalities Impact Assessment

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Date Published: 8 July 2020

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Woking Borough Council believes that the diversity of its population and workforce is one of its greatest strengths. Equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination is a fundamental right and this Council has a duty to exercise leadership to promote this right. The Council intends to promote equality and prevent discrimination through its roles as service provider, employer and community leader.
- 1.2 The Council will follow best practice in all equality areas and work to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not; and
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 1.3 From April 2011 the Equality Act 2010 brought together all previous equality legislation and gave full protection to eight protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Some aspect of the legislation also covers marriage and civil partnership.
- 1.4 Success in mainstreaming equalities in the organisation is measured by The Equality Framework for Local Government, which was adopted by the authority in March 2009. The Framework is based on three levels of achievement, developing, achieving and excellent. The Council has been successfully verified by external assessment at 'Achieving' level.

2.0 Progress

- 2.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty (specific duties) requires all public bodies to:
- Annually publish information that shows how they have complied with the Equality Duty. This was published on the Council website in January.
 - Set equality objectives for the organisation. Overarching objectives have been developed which are relevant to each of the equality groups covered by the Equality Act. They relate back to the General Duty and are designed to ensure a holistic approach to tackling inequality and promoting equality through the organisation and Borough. (attached Appendix 1)
- 2.2 The Equality and Wellbeing Working group met quarterly, monitoring progress on the equality and wellbeing agenda. An annual Wellbeing Week is held in September, which promotes healthy lifestyles, physical and mental wellbeing.
- 2.3 A comprehensive programme of equality and wellbeing awareness has taken place over the year, covering issues such as homophobia, mental health awareness and Dementia Action Week and Carers Week. This included displays around the building, information on ewok+ and emails. Feedback has been very positive and the more subtle approach has definitely stimulated conversations, hopefully achieving our longer term objective of informing hearts and minds.
- 2.4 In addition monthly health and wellbeing themes have also been highlighted on ewok+, offering helpful advice and tips on how to look after yourself and effectively manage life and work. Themes have included healthy heart, benefits of walking, diabetes awareness and men's health. Advice is also provided on how to achieve good mental health and wellbeing, including dealing with stress and obtaining a better work-life balance. The organisation has 9

trained Mental Health First Aiders and the Employee Assistance Programme is promoted regularly.

- 2.5 During the current Covid 19 crisis, particular emphasis has been placed on ensuring the health and wellbeing of employees, especially those working from home and in front-line support. This has included up to date information on Ewok+, training sessions on wellbeing and resilience and weekly health & wellbeing emails.
- 2.6 The equality agenda has been successfully mainstreamed throughout the organisation and the Council's priority is to ensure accessible services are available to the vulnerable sections of the local communities. Highlights for the year include the provision of support for Syrian refugees through New Vision Homes and The Family Support Service, continued support to vulnerable families via the Family Support Service and Family Centre team; development of the Social Prescribing service, involving 14 GP surgeries across Woking, further development of services for people with dementia at the Wellbeing Centre (e.g. advice sessions, creative lunch and carers choir); continued work with the Woking Dementia Action Alliance (DAA) where the Council is working with a variety of stakeholders and partners to make the Borough Dementia Friendly. (See Appendix 2)
- 2.7 Working relationships with community groups, providing support to those protected by equality legislation, continue to be developed. Outline, a local support group for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community, were supported in putting together information to mark International Day against Homophobia and Surrey Pride; Alzheimer's Society held some dementia awareness sessions for staff and Liaise Women's Centre actively participated in events such as Party in the Park and Refugee Week, worked on an upcycling project in Sheerwater and continue working with the Bengali community on Lakeview.
- 2.8 Equality monitoring figures are produced annually for employment, looking at areas such as workforce profile, appointments, training, promotion and discipline and grievance issues. These are broken down according to race, gender, disability, age, sexuality and religion and belief. These are detailed in Appendix 3.
- 2.9 From 6 April 2017 employers in Great Britain with more than 250 staff are required by law to publish annually its gender pay gap (mean and median averages) and the proportion of men and women in each quartile of the organisation's pay structure.
- 2.10 This year's report, covering the 12 months up to 31st March 2019, showed that the Council has a mean gender pay gap of 18.26% and a median gender pay gap of 15.76%. The mean gender pay gap nationally is now 15.7% according to the October 2019 Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) figures. The main reason for Woking's gap is an imbalance of male and female colleagues across the organisation, the roles in which men and women work within the organisation and the salaries that these roles attract.
- 2.11 The Council is committed to reducing its gender pay gap and an action plan has been developed to look at how best to achieve this, including carrying out further analysis of pay, reviewing recruitment processes, promoting flexible working options and development opportunities. The full report and action plan can be accessed at <https://www.woking.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Jobs/Pay%20Policy%20Statement%202020-21%20and%20Gender%20Pay%20Gap%20Data.pdf>

3.0 Future Plans

- 3.1 Across the organisation a huge amount of work is done to address the needs of the most vulnerable sections of the local communities and the equalities agenda has successfully been mainstreamed into service plans. In the current climate of scarce resources, partnership working with the statutory and voluntary sectors is increasingly important.

Building the capacity of local voluntary and community organisations to support this is an essential part of ensuring this happens. The current pandemic crisis has highlighted the excellent work that can be done with partnership working to ensure the most vulnerable in our community are supported. As we recover from this it will be important to ensure all members of our communities receive the support they require.

4.0 Implications

Financial

- 4.1 Equality work is mainstreamed into annual Service Plans and budgets allocated accordingly. In addition external funding is identified for specific projects as and when required.

Human Resource/Training and Development

- 4.2 Equality and Wellbeing Training is provided through Surrey Learn, a partnership of all Surrey local authorities. Internal awareness campaigns and training take place throughout the year. A Member awareness session is held annually

Community Safety

- 4.3 As a crosscutting issue equalities impacts on all areas of the Council's work, including community safety. Work on areas such as community cohesion, anti-social behaviour, domestic violence and preventing extremism all contribute towards the community safety agenda.

Risk Management

- 4.4 The Council has statutory responsibilities to drive forward the equalities agenda, promote equality and eliminate discrimination. In the current economic climate partnership working, with the statutory and voluntary sectors is essential in delivering on these priorities. Continual progress in equalities will enable the Council to achieve its goal of helping the most vulnerable sections of the local community.

Sustainability

- 4.5 Sustainability Impact Assessment attached.

Equalities

- 4.6 Equality Impact Assessment attached.

5.0 Consultations

- 5.1 Narrowing equality gaps and improving the life chances of different groups will require a pooling of evidence, resources and action planning. Working in partnership with the statutory, voluntary and community sectors will become increasingly important. Building and supporting the capacity of the voluntary/community sectors to enable this will be essential. The Council will have to become smarter at involving communities of interest in decision making, service and workforce planning, particularly groups who may experience disadvantage and inequality.

REPORT ENDS

Equality Objectives:

Overarching objectives that have been developed for the council's Corporate Equality Scheme which are relevant to each of the nine equality groups covered by the Equality Act, relate back to the General Duty and are designed to ensure a holistic approach to tackling inequality and promoting equality through the organisation. The overarching objectives are to:

Tackle victimisation, harassment and discrimination

Take reasonable steps to ensure that residents, service users and employees are not unlawfully discriminated against and take appropriate action to prevent & tackle victimisation and harassment.

Improve access to services

Take reasonable steps to ensure that services are inclusive, responsive to risk, physically accessible and provided through the most efficient and effective channels available.

Close the gap in outcomes for citizens

Take reasonable steps to improve life chances for citizens by reducing outcome gaps that may exist within the Borough as well as those that may exist between the Borough and elsewhere.

Increase understanding and mutual respect between communities

Take reasonable steps to build stronger communities and promote good relations, both within and between communities.

Increase participation and engagement

Take reasonable steps to remove barriers that may exist to engagement and help residents (especially those who are under-represented) to participate in local decision making and influence local decisions.

Ensure equitable employment policies and practices

Provide equality of opportunity for all Council staff by ensuring all employment policies and practices, (concerning recruitment, retention, promotion, training and discipline), are designed to reflect and attract the communities that Woking serves.

Equality actions/achievements: 2019/20:

Living Well Week October 2019

Programme of events to celebrate and value the diversity of the borough of Woking under the Celebrate Woking umbrella, including Chinese New Year, Refugee Week, the first Pride in Surrey, variety of children's workshops and activities including dance, science, arts and crafts, face painting and story-telling. Focus on sustainability including LA21, Bare and Fair, Surrey Community Action, Upcycling of clothes, Woking's Furniture Project, the Growth Team Surrey Choices and promoting organisations such as The Basingstoke Canal Society. Woking Street Angels, Heritage Open Days.

Young carers awareness training has been conducted to staff at WBC at two face to face sessions in January

WISH clinic opened to support vulnerable people on return to their own homes following hospital discharge, or where aids identified by a healthcare professional.

Community meals have improved the range they offer to include freshly made salads, soup, drinks, fresh fruit and frozen meal deliveries, including meeting dietary requirements, eg. texture modified foods, Halal, Kosher, Vegan, vegetarian and allergen free meals.

Social prescribing referrals now taking place across 14 GP surgeries across Woking to support those who are vulnerable in the community; with mental health, social isolation and other social issues

Training of Home Independence staff to be Trusted Assessors so that certain aids / equipment can be provided to residents without need for a lengthy wait for an OT assessment.

During Covid 19 support to vulnerable clients in the community by conducting welfare phone calls to assess whether they have enough food, care and prescription medication. Support to vulnerable residents at Brockhill with shopping and prescription requests. Assisted with delivery of meals for Homeless residents to the temporary accommodation provided by the Council.

In Sheerwater, the redevelopment project have a diverse client group to deal with and ensure that the same level of service and support is delivered to all the people engaged with. As the project has progressed and more people move out of the Regeneration Zone they have had to focus on the remaining tenants to ensure that their standard of living conditions are maintained to a high standard and that they do not become isolated. There are a number of tenants who have multiple or complex needs from various cultures, backgrounds and age groups but using partnership working and community links the team have ensured tenants stay engaged with the community and their well-being is maintained.

Customer Services colleagues have been involved in a lot of shielding and vulnerable calls. In some cases this has raised underlying issues which the team, because of their wealth of knowledge, have been able to flag up with the relevant services/organisations quickly to get help on board. This has enabled better working relationships with colleagues in Social Services and internal departments and hopefully this will continue.

The Family Centre team support vulnerable families with children aged 0-11. They do similar work to Family Support Programme but also deliver a range of group sessions and courses to support parents of young children. They work closely with partners including health visitors and school nurses, social care, charities and voluntary organisations.

The Family Support team identified 48 as having multiple and complex needs and successfully worked with them. Since the Covid 19 pandemic, there has been a significant increase in the

referrals being received. Support focusses on parenting, housing, financial management, training and employment, healthy relationships and positive health and wellbeing.

Syrian Refugee Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) - Another successful year for the team; the key focus is on supporting families to access housing, benefits, education and employment. Just before Covid-19 the 50th VPRS case was welcomed, the first reunification case. During lockdown ongoing support is provided from a distance and the families are coping well. Employment rates remain just above 30%.

ESOL classes are being rolled out by Woking College via Zoom and volunteers have been having regular WhatsApp video conversations with families in English. Some of our Syrian ladies have been involved in the sewing of laundry bags for the NHS. Some families will be due to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain at the end of 2020. A presentation/information session has been prepared to help families understand the process. The Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme is currently on hold due to Covid-19 so all previously arranged new arrivals have been temporarily cancelled. The aim is still to reach the original commitment to resettle 60 families in Woking.

In January 2020, Business and Community Engagement arranged a briefing for Woking Shopping about AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo). The Council has supported DisabledGo since soon after its conception in 2000 by Dr Gregory Burke. Dr Burke unexpectedly became a wheelchair user, and his experience led him to wanting to provide more information about public spaces and town centres for people with disabilities. Woking continues to support the charity and takes part in regular accessibility audits of the town centre's many public spaces and outlets, to provide current and detailed information for visitors with a wide range of access requirements. AccessAble has now evolved to provide a useful app and new website for residents and visitors, which were demonstrated to Woking Shopping's retail liaison team. Woking Shopping was impressed by the depth of information gathered at audits and how it encourages new and repeat visits from people with disabilities and access requirements, along with their companions and families, and will be working with the Council to ensure that the latest information is available to users of AccessAble, particularly as the town's retail and leisure offer is developed further in the coming months and years.

Equalities Monitoring Data for the period 1/4/2019 – 31/3/2020

1. *Breakdown of all employees by:

*These figures are based on 453 employees; this includes all employees all on the payroll including casual employees who may only work very occasionally.

a) Ethnic background

Asian/ Asian British	40
Black/Black British	12
Chinese/Other	4
Mixed	5
White	344
Gypsy/Traveller	0
Romany Gypsy	0
Irish Traveller	1
Other (please specify)	38
Not Known	7
Prefer not to say	2

b) Gender

Male	157
Female	296
Transgender	0
Prefer not to say	0

c) Declaration of Disability

Yes	21
No	411
Prefer not to say	15
Not Known	6

d) Age

Under 25	23
25 - 34	64
35 - 44	118
45 - 54	117
55 - 64	104
Over 65	27

e) Sexual orientation

Heterosexual/Straight	416
Bisexual	3
Gay or Lesbian	5
Prefer not to say	15
Not Known	14

f) Religion

Christian	221
Buddhist	1
Hindu	10
Jewish	1
Muslim	35
Sikh	1
No Religion	146
Other (Please specify)	5
Not Known	27
Prefer not to say	6

2. How many people belonging to each group applied to the Council for employment during the period?

a) Ethnic background

Asian/ Asian British	32
Black/Black British	9
Chinese/Other	0
Mixed	38
White	812
Gypsy/Traveller	0
Romany Gypsy	0
Irish Traveller	0
Other (please specify)	5
Not Known	6
Prefer not to say	5

b) Gender

Male	508
Female	675
Transgender	3
Other	1
Prefer not to say	18
Not Known	27

c) Declaration of Disability

Yes	69
No	1154
Not known	3
Prefer not to say	20

d) Age

Under 25	208
25 - 34	349
35 - 44	326
45 - 54	197
55 - 64	131
Over 65	6
Not Known	17

e) Sexual orientation

Heterosexual/Straight	1092
Bisexual	14
Gay or Lesbian	44
Prefer not to say	48
Not Known	34

f) Religion

Christian	432
Buddhist	16
Hindu	29
Jewish	1
Muslim	178
Sikh	5
No Religion	411
Other (Please specify)	46
Not Known	33
Prefer not to say	79

3. How many people belonging to each group applied for/received training during the period?

a) Ethnic background

BME	35
White	106
Prefer not to say	0

b) Gender

Male	54
Female	87
Transgender	0

c) Declaration of Disability

Yes	5
No	136
Prefer not to say	0

d) Age

Under 25	7
25 - 34	35
35 - 44	38
45 - 54	33
55 - 64	27
Over 65	1

4. How many people belonging to each group were promoted during the period?

a) Ethnic background

BME	0
White	8

b) Gender

Male	5
Female	3
Transgender	0

c) Declaration of Disability

Yes	0
No	8

d) Age

Under 25	0
25 - 34	1
35 - 44	5
45 - 54	2
55 - 64	0
Over 65	0

5. How many people belonging to each group "benefited or suffered detriment as a result of formal performance assessment procedures"?

None

6. How many people belonging to each group were involved in grievance procedures?

a) Ethnic background

BME	1
White	0

b) Gender

Male	0
Female	1
Transgender	0

c) Declaration of Disability

Yes	0
No	1

d) Age

Under 25	0
25 - 34	0
35 - 44	1
45 - 54	0
55 - 64	0
Over 65	0

7. How many people belonging to each group were the subjects of disciplinary procedures?

None.

8. How many people belonging to each group ceased employment with the Council during the period?

a) Ethnic background

Asian/ Asian British	7
Black/Black British	2
Chinese/Other	1
Mixed	1
White	47
Not Known	0
Gypsy/Traveller	0
Romany Gypsy	0
Irish Traveller	0
Other (please specify)	8
Prefer not to say	2
Not Known	0

b) Gender

Male	25
Female	43
Transgender	0

c) Declaration of Disability

Yes	5
No	63
Prefer not to say	3
Not Known	0

d) Age

Under 25	3
25 - 34	18
35 - 44	8
45 - 54	19
55 - 64	15
Over 65	5

9. Carers

a) Ethnic background

BME	3
White	18

b) Gender

Male	4
Female	17
Transgender	0

c) Declaration of Disability

Yes	4
No	17

d) Age

Under 25	0
25 - 34	0
35 - 44	2
45 - 54	7
55 - 64	12
Over 65	0

10. Flexible Working Requests

Number received:	15
Number agreed:	14
Success rate %	93.3%

10. Return to Work from Maternity

Number returned:	7
Success rate:	77.7%