

WOKING TOWN CENTRE PLACE IDENTITY

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the development of a place identity for Woking Town Centre that reflects the town's ambition and vision as a residential, commercial and leisure/entertainment hub.

The project would incorporate the development of an ongoing engagement and communications strategy for the town centre, including the launch of the completed Victoria Square development through an integrated marketing and public relations campaign.

A place identity, or brand, is a tool that will successfully tell the story of our place. It will differentiate Woking from its competitors by creating and managing a distinctive and unique image, building upon the successful #WeAreWoking and Celebrate Woking campaigns.

At its heart will be a strong narrative that captures the key elements of a place – location, culture, history, future aspirations and community. All supported by a coherent and professional visual identity.

Building a strong identity will support our vision to cement Woking as a desirable place to live and a destination for business and leisure; creating a sustainable, inclusive and diverse community in a thriving town centre where there is easy access to services and activities that supports the health and wellbeing of our residents.

Benefits of our place identity include:

- Promote Woking as a visitor destination.
- Promote civic pride amongst existing residents.
- Attract new people/families to live in the area.
- Attract new businesses and inward investment.
- Encourage local people to spend more time and money in the area.

Before developing a place identity, it is necessary to obtain the views and opinions of local residents and businesses. Such impartial research helps inform the creative development of a place identity.

Earlier this year, the views of residents and businesses were sought through a series of friendship groups, face-to-face and telephone interviews to gain an understanding of attitudes and opinions towards Woking's future.

The findings were clear. Whilst Woking has limited 'heritage', the town has positive perpetual momentum, always improving, always transforming. There was a clear desire from business, retail and residents for a statement of place that embraces Woking's destiny as a place for culture, community and connection.

To deliver the place identity project, it is proposed that the Council completes a full tender process to select a supplier with the necessary experience and expertise to support this project.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) a place identity be developed for Woking Town Centre;
- (ii) the Marketing Communications Manager, in consultation with the relevant member of Corporate Management Group, conducts a tender process for the selection of a supplier to support the development of a place identity; and
- (iii) the Marketing Communications Manager report back to the Executive on completion of the tender process to recommend a contract award to support the development of place identity.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To enable the development of a place identity for Woking Town Centre and develop an ongoing engagement and communications strategy.

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, Extn: 3333

Contact Person: Andy Denner, Marketing Communications Manager
Email: andy.denner@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3026

Portfolio Holder: Councillor David Bittleston
Email: clldravid.bittleston@woking.gov.uk

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

Date Published: 18 March 2020

1.0 Background

- 1.1 In 2017, work commenced on one of the region's most ambitious residential and retail developments, Victoria Square. The construction and regeneration project will transform the western quarter of Woking Town Centre and act as a catalyst for future transformational works.
- 1.2 Once complete, the landmark development will feature 429 residential apartments, 125,000 sq. ft. of new retail floor space anchored by Marks & Spencer, new Boots store, prestigious Hilton Hotel with conference facilities and Sky Bar offering unrivalled views across Surrey, medical centre, new car park and two public plazas.
- 1.3 The development is set to transform Woking's residential, retail and leisure experience.
- 1.4 With the Victoria Square development progressing towards completion, integral to its success is the delivery of a strong place identity for Woking Town Centre that reflects the town's ambition and vision as a residential, commercial and leisure/entertainment hub.

2.0 What is a place identity?

- 2.1 A place identity, or brand, is a tool that can successfully tell the story of our place. It will differentiate Woking from its competitors by creating and managing a distinctive and unique image.
- 2.2 At its heart is a strong narrative that sums up the key elements of Woking – location, culture, history, future aspirations and community. All supported by a coherent and professional visual identity.

3.0 What are the benefits of a place identity?

- 3.1 A place that has an engaging and respected identity can benefit from, but is not limited to, the following benefits.
 - Creates a unifying focus for residents, visitors, businesses and community organisations.
 - Addresses out-of-date, inaccurate or unbalanced perceptions.
 - Increases attractiveness and desirability.
 - Provides a foundation for new business and investment.
 - Enhances civic pride and advocacy.
 - Provides greater strategic focus.
 - Brings trust and confidence in a place.
 - Establishes a clear, valued and sustainable distinction in the minds of visitors.
 - Improves partnerships with key stakeholders.

4.0 Developing a place identity

- 4.1 Before developing a place identity, it is necessary to obtain the views and opinions of local residents and businesses. Such impartial research helps inform the creative development of a place identity.

Woking Town Centre Place Identity

- 4.2 Earlier this year, the views of residents and businesses were sought through a series of friendship groups, face-to-face and telephone interviews to gain an understanding of attitudes and opinions towards Woking's future.
- 4.3 The findings were clear. Whilst Woking has limited 'heritage', the town has positive perpetual momentum, always improving, always transforming. There was a clear desire from business and residents for a statement of place that embraces Woking's destiny as a place for culture, community and connection.
- 4.4 The research has enabled the development of a creative brief, building upon the thoughts, feelings and expectations that people hold about Woking into the beginning of a place identity and creative direction.
- 4.5 The findings were presented during a Members Briefing hosted on Monday 16 March 2020.
- 4.6 A copy of the presentation is attached to this report at Appendix 1.

5.0 Place identity roll-out and development launch

- 5.1 The scope of the project would not only incorporate the development of a visual identity for Woking Town Centre, but also include:
 - Development of a brand strategy that would include, but not limited to, guidance on colour palette, typography, iconography, tone of voice, signage (internal and external) and usage rules.
 - Develop engagement and communications strategy to drive awareness and engagement, create excitement and anticipation that strengthens Woking's position as a community-focused residential, retail, business and leisure destination.
 - Organise and deliver a series of events that promotes Woking's position as a destination of choice, including the opening of the Victoria square development.
 - Deliver detailed campaign evaluation reports.

6.0 Place identity delivery

- 6.1 To deliver the place identity project, it is proposed that the Council completes a full tender process through the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU), with a view to selecting a supplier with the necessary experience and expertise.
- 6.2 Copies of the initial research commissioned by the Council will be made available to suppliers as part of the tender process.
- 6.3 The project would be managed by the Marketing Communications Manager and relevant member of the Council's Corporate Management Group.
- 6.4 The Marketing Communications Manager will report back to the Executive on completion of the tender process to recommend a contract award to support the development of a place identity.

7.0 Implications

Financial

- 7.1 The financial implications of the place identity project will be brought back to the Executive once the tender process is complete.

Human Resource/Training and Development

- 7.2 There are no human resources / training and development implications associated with this report.

Community Safety

- 7.3 There are no community safety implications with this report.

Risk Management

- 7.4 The loss of the opportunity to create a strong place identity for Woking Town Centre risks insufficient engagement with residents and businesses, and in turn, risks the sustainable development of the town centre.

Sustainability

- 7.5 There are no sustainability implications with this report.

Equalities

- 7.6 There are no equalities implications with this report.

Safeguarding

- 7.7 There are no safeguarding implications with this report.

8.0 Consultations

- 8.1 The Leader of the Council and members of the Corporate Management Group have been consulted on this report.

REPORT ENDS