

## 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.
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## Framework for Recovery

**Background Papers:** None.

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**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