

Appendix 1 – LGA Corporate Peer Review Response and Action Plan

Executive Resolution	Summary of actions arising from resolution	Status
(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	At its meeting of 25 March 2021, the Executive approved the Council's Corporate Plan for 2021/22. The Corporate Plan provides an overview of the Council's strategic focus for the coming year. It encapsulates the commitments made previously by the Council, bringing them together into a single plan of action.	Completed
(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	Resolutions (i) (ii) and (iii) all relate directly to the Council's commitment to constant communication with its residents. Whilst each resolution has been addressed, they are best read in conjunction with each other. The Council's vision is to be in constant communication with residents and to have an embedded culture of consultation in how it operates and makes decisions that are in the best interests of the communities of the Woking Borough. The Executive received a report on 20 January on Community Engagement and Communication.	Completed and ongoing. Engagement and Consultation will continue to be a key priority in the emerging Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan will have key performance indicators and monitoring arrangements in place.
(iii) Officers undertake a series of public engagement events to explain the framework for town centre development proposals	In summary, the Council has taken significant steps to implement an ambitious programme of engagement. Investment has been made into an on-line civic engagement digital platform, the Woking Community Forum, and a representative Residents' Panel has been established. The first meeting of the Residents' Panel was on the 7 th July. There are in excess of 750 residents	
(iv) the Citizens Panel be re-established and a programme of issues upon which to consult		

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<p>it be established with an initial focus on the health and well-being in partnership with the Integrated Care Partnership</p>	<p>who have registered to be on the Panel.</p> <p>A series of community roadshows took place between November and December 2021 alongside an engagement questionnaire, to obtain community feedback, to inform and influence the corporate priorities for the Council.</p> <p>The Council has determined that residents' views should influence the Council's five-year Corporate Strategy for 2022-2027. To fulfil this commitment, an online questionnaire was hosted on the Council's engagement hub, Woking Community Forum. In addition, 3,000 paper copies were sent to randomly selected households across the borough and eight engagement roadshows were hosted at key community-based locations.</p> <p>The Council has committed to prepare a newly defined Town Centre Masterplan to help guide future sustainable development within the Town Centre. The Executive Committee at their meeting of the 15 July 2021 agreed the overview of the master plan and budget. The Masterplan will seek to establish an overarching vision for Woking Town Centre that will enable sustainable development including new homes, a thriving business and retail destination as well as strengthening Woking as a cultural, recreational and community destination. During late summer a series of virtual workshops were held with Woking Residents' Panel, who gave their views on the current development of Woking Town Centre and their aspirations for the</p>	
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	<p>future. In addition, face-to-face meetings have been conducted with key employers within the borough to understand their future needs and wants for a prosperous future. It is anticipated that the draft Masterplan will be presented to Council late spring 2022, before a formal in-depth and wide-ranging public consultation will begin later in the year.</p>	
<p>(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</p>	<p>A review of the Green Book will commence in March 2022 following the development and agreement of the new Corporate Strategy which will be considered by the Executive at its meeting on 3rd February 2022.</p> <p>The Green Book will be reviewed in order for it to align with the Corporate Plan as it should provide the key performance information for which to measure progress on delivering the key priorities of the Council.</p> <p>The review is being initiated through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>	<p>Ongoing – scheduled to commence following the publication of the new Corporate Plan.</p>
<p>(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</p>	<p>The Council adopted the amended ThamesWey Group Protocols (Page 281 of the consultation) which outline communications by ThamesWey with Councillors.</p>	<p>Completed</p>

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<p>(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;</p>	<p>Treasury management has been incorporated into the Medium Term Financial Planning reporting through 2021 and the budget report to the Executive on 3rd February 2022 and Council on 10th February 2022.</p> <p>A Financial Review and Insight independent review was commissioned and was completed by 31st December 2021. This review incorporates a comprehensive statement covering borrowing and a review of all assets and liabilities of Woking Borough Council and all companies in which it has an interest. A report is on the O&S Agenda for 24 January 2022.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>(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;</p>	<p>The Council has developed and implemented integrated service and financial planning in 2021/22 as considered and approved by the Executive at its meeting on 15th July 2021.</p> <p>A progress report on the integrated service and financial planning was provided to the meeting of the Executive on 7th October 2021 and 18th November which provided details of the Fit for the Future Programme which represents the Council's change plans and activity.</p> <p>A Head of Transformation and Digital post has been established and the post holder took up the role on 18th October 2021. A Digital Strategy was presented to the Executive at its meeting on 18th November and following this a first year action plan is being developed.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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<p>(ix) an Internal Audit Review be undertaken in respect of the Overview and Scrutiny function and the resources required to ensure its effectiveness;</p>	<p>Internal Audit was commissioned as part of the Woking Borough Council (Council) Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22 ('Plan'), to conduct an advisory review of effectiveness of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee effectiveness. A draft report from the auditors was presented to Corporate Leadership Team in September and again on the 4 October including management comments. The audit was finalised in early October and shared with those who contributed to audit.</p> <p>In addition the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at their meeting in September received a detailed paper on the provisions of the statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in 2019 making recommendations for improvement. The implementation of the agreed actions arising and any additional actions arising from the audit will be monitored by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>(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;</p>	<p>The Council commissioned the Local Government Association to undertake a Peer Review of the Planning Service. This has been undertaken and the Council is awaiting the final report.</p> <p>A Community Engagement campaign is being developed and a new engagement officer post has been established to develop a managed programme of community engagement plans and activity. More details in respect of The Council's Community engagement commitments can be found in the Community</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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	<p>Engagement and Communication report to the Executive on 20 January.</p> <p>A meeting was held with an ex S151 officer, through the Local Government Association, to gain independent views on the Councils Medium Term Financial Strategy approach and open up learning from other authorities.</p>	
<p>(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</p>	<p>The Council is adopting the Microsoft 365 platform towards the end of 2021 which support the Councils remote working policy and development of an increasingly more agile workplace. A change programme is being established alongside the technical implementation in order to support service adoption of the platform and promote collaborative working opportunities it presents.</p> <p>The Council continues to host meetings virtually where legislation allows for it to do so.</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>(xii) in the autumn the Council should consider its longer-term management arrangements as part of its 2021/22 business planning process.</p>	<p>The Fit for the Future programme has been established by the Chief Executive as the programme of change for the Council that will establish the culture, regime and focus for the how the Council will operate as a trusted voice, advocate and agent of change for the Borough.</p> <p>This programme is established on the themes of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > A culture of engagement - to understand and respond to the priorities of the Borough's Communities > A regime of conducting Council business with openness and transparency enabling strong democratic accountability 	<p>Ongoing</p>

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	<p>> A focus on a one council way of working to deliver strong organisational performance and resilience</p> <p>Delivering this Fit for the Future programme will include a review of the operating model of the Council to ensure it is best organised to drive forward and support the delivery of the programme. Proposals will be developed over the next 6-9 months to bring forward proposals that will establish a model of working for the Council that best addresses the challenges and maximises the returns from the best characteristics of the Council. The key principles that are informing the approach include:</p> <p>> Digital First service delivery designed around the residents' journey of dealings with the Council;</p> <p>> working in partnership with public and commercial sector organisations to reduce the cost of operations; provide sustainable and resilient services; adopting best practice and innovation and positioning the Council as a key influencer and advocate in the region; and</p> <p>> adopting our version of operating as a commercial organisation in support of the Council's role as an active steward of the Borough's communities and generating wealth and benefit within the local economy.</p>	
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