

PUBLIC REALM USAGE POLICY

Executive Summary

The Council adopted a Public Realm Usage Policy in order to better manage the town centre spaces open to the public, and the events permitted within the town centre denoted boundary, for the benefit of all users.

As owner and manager of a number of public spaces within the town centre, it is important that any activity taking place within the public realm enhances the image of Woking as a quality destination in which to spend time and does not compromise anyone's safety or well-being.

The policy aims to effectively manage the number of activities taking place, ensure clear pedestrian routes and access for emergency vehicles are maintained, facilitate and encourage appropriate events and entertainment, and enable local community groups and charities to use the public realm to promote their causes.

The policy covers such activities as street entertainment and buskers, vendors and market stalls, parades, annual and cultural events, street scene advertising, and leafleting.

The policy was last updated in October 2015, but a review was suspended at that time owing to the planned extensive development of the town centre. However, now that the majority of the development has taken place, the locations given in the policy are no longer reflective of the spaces available.

In addition, there have been some changes to management and administration arrangements within the public realm, so it is timely that the policy be updated and approved to reflect these.

As per previous updates of the policy, Members, internal colleagues and external stakeholders have been consulted with to ensure that information given remains current and valid, and these include Victoria Place and Christ Church.

There are no major changes being proposed to the policy beyond those stated above.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

the updated Public Realm Usage Policy, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To ensure fair and consistent usage of the town centre to promote footfall and economic prosperity.

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

Background Papers: None.

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DRAFT

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council adopted a policy created by the former Woking Town Centre Management to cover any events and activities within the open spaces of the town centre in the early 2000's, in order to better manage the public realm and safeguard the well-being and enjoyment of everyone using it.
- 1.2 Since then, the policy has been updated at least twice to allow for contemporary changes to the town centre environment, as well as to reflect any updates to management arrangements of the public realm.
- 1.3 The policy was last updated in October 2015 and has been reviewed now because of the redevelopment of the town centre (Victoria Place).

2.0 Current situation

- 2.1 The published policy is out of date, mainly owing to the change in available spaces to hire within the public realm. Since the last policy update, there have also been changes to personnel and teams involved with booking and managing those spaces, both at the Council and Victoria Place (formerly Woking Shopping).
- 2.2 Victoria Place remains the main point of contact for all booking enquiries within the public realm and manages all those that take place within the shopping centres. Any enquiries for outdoor town centre space hire are referred to Property Services to determine the suitability of an event/seek permission for the space booking, and to identify any potential source of income from the same.

3.0 Proposal

- 3.1 Following consultation with relevant internal teams and external partners, the policy has once again been updated to reflect any changes to the physical environment and management arrangements.
- 3.2 There are no major changes being proposed to the policy beyond the periodic updates specific above.

4.0 Corporate Strategy

- 4.1 In line with the aims of Woking For All, events held within the public realm help to promote the town centre as a destination, which can help increase footfall within the public realm. This aims to benefit town centre businesses and increase income for the Council, prospering the local economy as a whole.

5.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 5.1 There are no identified adverse financial implications arising from people using the public realm, although an income stream could be generated through the commercialisation of outdoor public spaces within the town centre.
- 5.2 Each event booker carries out their own risk assessment. The policy itself is a set of guidelines, not a bylaw, and therefore can only be enforced where there is a legal basis to challenge any activities taking place in the public realm.

Equalities and Human Resources

5.3 No implications identified. The policy applies to everyone who uses the public realm.

Legal

5.4 No relevant Legal implications. The updated Public Realm Policy will ensure that the public urban spaces in the town centre are managed and accessible in a positive manner.

6.0 Engagement and Consultation

6.1 The following Members, Council teams and external partners have been consulted in the preparation of this draft policy:

- Cllr Roberts
- Cllr Davis
- Christ Church Woking
- Community Development
- Community Safety
- Customer Services
- Environmental Health
- Estates
- Insurance
- Legal
- Licensing
- Marketing Communications
- Parking Services
- Victoria Place
- Victoria Square Woking Limited
- Planning

REPORT ENDS