

WOKING FOR ALL STRATEGY

Executive Summary

The Woking For All Strategy (WFAS) was adopted by the Council in March 2022. The Strategy covers the period 2022 to 2027 and outlines how the Council will support the communities and residents of Woking over the five-year period. A full refresh was planned to be undertaken in the Autumn of 2023; however, this work did not commence due to the corporate focus on resident and staff consultations which resulted in significant service restructures.

Reflecting the need to ensure an appropriate focus on the Council's Improvement and Recovery Plan, alongside progressing key service issues, now is a good time to reset the aims and objectives of the WFAS to help the Council concentrate on activity that is most important at this stage in its development.

Work has been underway for several months to review and re-frame the WFAS. To inform this process, a range of workshops and discussions have been held with Councillors and Officers; the primary aim of this work has been to explore and map future service priorities, and to design a framework within which all actions (corporate, service specific or at an individual level) can fit, thereby ensuring a 'golden thread' across the Council.

The draft proposed strategic framework is attached at Appendix 1. The proposal focuses on setting a strategic framework which is based around three top level themes (Thriving Communities, High Performing Council, and Effective Partnerships), under which a number of explicit strategic objectives are proposed.

If the framework is agreed, the next step will be to expand the detail of the WFAS through the development of specific and measurable actions, with the consolidated draft being submitted to the November Executive, after which a final proposal can be submitted to full Council in December for adoption.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

the draft framework for the refreshed Woking For All Strategy (WFAS) be agreed to enable the next stage of development to be undertaken.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To enable the adoption of a refreshed Woking Borough Council Corporate Plan.

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

Background Papers: None.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Woking For All Strategy (WFAS) was adopted by the Council in March 2022. The Strategy covers the period 2022 to 2027 and outlines how the Council will support the communities and residents of Woking over the five-year period. The Strategy is currently comprised of five themes, around which the objectives and priority outcomes of the Council are articulated.
- 1.2 The original intention of the WFAS was to set a five-year plan which would be subject to an annual refresh to ensure that it remained current, representative of the voice of residents and communities, and in touch with the matters that were important for the Borough.
- 1.3 A full refresh was planned to be undertaken in the Autumn of 2023; however, this work did not commence due to the corporate focus on resident and staff consultations which resulted in significant service restructures. Because of this unprecedented change, it was agreed that the Council was not in a position to set any meaningful service-related objectives and/or priorities at that time.
- 1.4 However, it is now appropriate to revisit the WFAS to set out what the Council is most concerned to achieve on behalf of local residents, ensuring a continued focus on the Council's Improvement and Recovery Plan and those service issues that must be addressed, for example, in response to Government policy or procurement requirements.

2.0 Purpose of the WFAS

- 2.1 A refreshed WFAS will enable the Council to clearly articulate what it is aiming to achieve on behalf of the residents of Woking; this is an opportunity to be explicit about the Council's priorities and the objectives that will flow from them. The new WFAS will be based on the following guiding principles:
 - It will form a key part of the Council's system of accountability to the public.
 - It will provide clarity and direction to staff.
 - It will stress the need to be focussed; if the Council's aspirations are too broad and too grandiose, the ability to deliver will be compromised.
- 2.2 It will make clear to partners what the Council is striving to achieve, so that partnerships and delivery models can be jointly explored.
 - It will underpin the Council's performance management.
 - The duration of the WFAS should be aligned to the life cycle of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy which runs for 4 years, covering 2024/25 to 2028/29.
 - When setting objectives and actions, consideration should be given to longer term planning which will often extend beyond one year.
- 2.3 The refresh is also an opportunity to simplify the structure and make the strategy more accessible for all stakeholders. The update will reflect the reduction to the size/services of the Council, with a focus on delivering effective statutory duties and improving internal processes.

3.0 Development of the WFAS

- 3.1 Work has been underway for several months to review and re-frame the WFAS. To inform this process, a range of workshops and discussions have been held with the Corporate Leadership Team, individual Strategic Directors, and all Heads of Service across the Council. The primary aim of this work has been to explore and map future service priorities, and to design a

framework within which all actions (corporate, service specific or at an individual level) can fit, thereby creating a 'golden thread' across the Council.

3.2 Member consultation has also been key in developing a draft framework; discussions have been held with Executive Members, and the Leader and Deputy Leader have been heavily involved in shaping the proposal. An all-Member briefing was also held on 1 October to share the current direction of travel and to seek feedback on the proposals.

3.3 The proposal focuses on setting a strategic framework which is based around three top level themes (Thriving Communities, High Performing Council, and Effective Partnerships), under which a number of explicit strategic objectives are proposed.

4.0 Next Steps

4.1 If the proposed framework at Appendix 1 is agreed, the next steps required to finalise the WFAS will be as follows:

- Develop detail around each theme and associated objective; this will take the form of developing specific actions, outputs, outcomes, and success measures.
- Produce a consolidated draft WFAS to be submitted to 14 November 2024 Executive.
- Final proposal to be submitted to full Council on 12 December 2024 for formal adoption.

5.0 Corporate Strategy

5.1 The adoption of a new WFAS will form the basis of a new Corporate Strategy for the Council.

6.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

6.1 The refreshed WFAS will contain priorities, objectives, and actions that should underpin the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. The proposed actions to deliver the Strategy will need to be risk-assessed.

Equalities and Human Resources

6.2 The refreshed WFAS will contain priorities, objectives, and actions that support the delivery of equalities and human resources initiatives.

Legal

6.3 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Environment and Climate Change

6.4 The refreshed WFAS will contain priorities, objectives, and actions that support the delivery of climate change and environmental initiatives.

7.0 Engagement and Consultation

7.1 Councillors and Officers have been consulted in the development of the WFAS proposal.

REPORT ENDS

The Woking For All Strategy Proposed Framework

Vision Statement:

“A financially and environmentally sustainable Council delivering services that residents value in every part of the borough”.

Mission Statement:

A trusted and transparent Council that:

- *Lives within its means.*
- *Focuses its energy on services that make a difference to people in the borough.*
- *Works in partnership with all communities to deliver positive outcomes.*
- *Continually engages with residents to design more efficient and effective services.*
- *Invests in talent to deliver for Woking’s future.*

Our Vision will be brought to life through a Corporate Plan spanning the life of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The Corporate Plan is based around three core themes:

**Thriving
Communities**

A Council that focuses its energy on services that make a difference to people in the borough. A place where residents feel safe and lead healthy and fulfilling lifestyles.

**High Performing
Council**

A trusted and transparent Council that lives within its means. A Council that aspires to deliver best practice across all services and puts residents at the heart of what we do.

**Effective
Partnerships**

A Council that works in partnership with all communities to deliver positive outcomes and engages with residents to design more efficient and effective services.



High quality homes for all

- Invest in our Council homes to ensure they are safe and well-maintained in a way that is financially sustainable and responsive to tenants.
- Working to prevent homelessness and address its root causes.

Health and wellbeing for all

- Support our most vulnerable residents to access key services, as cost effectively as possible and in conjunction with partners.

Safe, attractive, and greener communities

- Promote sustainability and continue to invest in green spaces and clean streets.

A culture of continuous improvement across all services and functions

- Develop the systems, processes and culture that enables the Council to meet its Best Value duty.
- Ensure effective governance to enable rounded decision-making, based on a proper understanding of options and their consequences (including financial, legal and risks) which are tested through appropriate scrutiny.

A modern employer with a high performing workforce

- Staff are developed and supported to deliver high performing and cost-effective services.

A financially responsible council with sustainable and affordable plans

- Effective financial management and planning.
- Effective use of our estate to deliver maximum value for money and support the Council's place-shaping responsibilities.
- Effective approach to the commissioning, procurement and contract-management of organisations that supply goods and services to the Council.
- Effectively manage the relationship with the Council's wholly owned companies in a way that ensures the public interest is protected.
- Tackle the legacy issues confronting the Council rigorously, to best protect the public interest.

Working with partners to deliver community priorities

- Ensuring residents continue to benefit from a range of leisure, cultural, and community facilities across the Borough, including through unlocking the contribution of voluntary and community groups.

A strong and sustainable economy with an enabling infrastructure

- Responsible planning and development to support local place-shaping and the delivery of well-designed homes of all tenures.

Informed and consulted residents

- Reach out and listen to our communities and act on their feedback.