

## WOKING FOR ALL STRATEGY

**Meeting:** Executive

**Date Of Meeting:** 14 November 2024

**Report Author(s):** Pino Mastromarco

**Lead Officer:** Kevin Foster | kevin.foster@woking.gov.uk

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Ann-Marie Barker | cllrann-marie.barker@woking.gov.uk

**Date Published:** 6 November 2024

Will the decision be open for call in (i.e. is it a key decision)?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

### 1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to propose the refreshed Woking for All Strategy (WFAS) to the Executive for adoption and recommendation to Council. The aim of the WFAS is to clearly set out the Council's priorities and objectives for the next three years and to set out how these will be delivered through a range of specific and measurable actions.

### 2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Executive is requested to:

#### RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL THAT

**The new Woking for All Strategy, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted.**

#### Reason for Decision

2.2 To enable the adoption of a refreshed Corporate Plan (WFAS) which clearly sets out the priorities and objectives of the Council, including in the context of the current Government intervention in Woking.

### 3.0 Proposal and Outcome

3.1 The proposal is for the Executive to recommend to Council that the Strategy is formally adopted. Once adopted, the Strategy will frame the Council's ambition and work can commence on delivering the stated priorities and objectives.

3.2 Robust performance reporting will be applied throughout the life of the WFAS; this will take the form of regular reports to the Executive which will track progress against each of the objectives and associated actions. Each action will be measured against

planned completion dates, as well as pre-defined outputs, outcomes, and success measures that have been mapped.

### 4.0 Background

- 4.1 The WFAS was first adopted by the Council in March 2022. The Strategy covered the period 2022 to 2027 and outlined how the Council will support the communities and residents of Woking over the original five-year period. The 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 matters that were important for the Borough.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 In the context of the significant challenges facing Woking which culminated in Government intervention and, as a result, 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. This is to help the Council concentrate on activity that is most important at this stage in its development.

### 5.0 Options Considered

- 5.1 The creation and adoption of a Corporate Plan is fundamental to the development and continuous improvement of the Council. The option of doing nothing is not considered to be a viable alternative.
- 5.2 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.
  - 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 2027/28.
  - When setting objectives and actions, consideration has been given to longer term planning which will often extend beyond one year.

5.3 The refresh is also an opportunity to simplify the structure and make the Strategy more accessible for all stakeholders. The updated Strategy reflects the reduction to the size/services of the Council, with a focus on delivering effective statutory duties and delivering the improvement's required by the Improvement and Recovery Plan.

### **6.0 Development of the WFAS**

6.1 Work has been underway for several months to review 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 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.

6.2 Member consultation has also been key in developing the WFAS; discussions have been held with Executive Members, and the Leader and Deputy Leader have been heavily involved in shaping the Strategy. An all-Member Briefing was also held on 1 October 2024 to share the current direction of travel and to seek feedback on the proposal.

6.3 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 sit a number of explicit strategic objectives and priorities.

### **7.0 Decision Type/Scope [Council and Executive only]**

7.1 The adoption of the WFAS is a key decision that will have a significant positive impact on the Council and the Borough. The WFAS will directly influence the priorities of the Council for the years ahead, and form a commitment to residents, Councillors, and staff about how resources will be used to effectively deliver services in a way that meets the Council's Best Value duty.

### **8.0 Implications**

#### Legal

8.1 The Strategy is designed to help the Council discharge its Best Value obligations.

#### Resources (including finance)

8.2 The delivery of every action will require resources in terms of officer time and, in some cases, financial commitment. If the delivery of an action requires funding over and above current agreed budgets, it will be subject to usual decision-making arrangements to ensure that it is meeting Best Value needs prior to authorisation.

8.3 The WFAS will be subject to ongoing review and regular performance monitoring. The refreshed WFAS also contain priorities, objectives, and actions that underpin the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### Risks and Mitigation

- 8.4 The adoption of the WFAS does not pose any direct risk to the Council, indeed a clearly defined and prioritised Corporate Plan will reduce risk as it will provide an approved framework against which all activity can be assessed.
- 8.5 The delivery of each individual action will result in differing degrees of risk; however, these will be carefully monitored on a regular basis to ensure that any impact is highlighted, and mitigation measures put in place where necessary.

### Consultation, Equality Impact Assessments

- 8.6 Councillors and Officers have been consulted in the development of the WFAS.
- 8.7 Equality impact Assessments (EIAs) have not been undertaken for the WFAS as a whole, however EIAs might be undertaken as required for individual actions within the Strategy should the need arise. This will be managed on a case-by-case basis.

### Environment and Climate Change

- 8.8 The refreshed WFAS contains priorities, objectives, and actions that support the delivery of climate change and environmental initiatives.

## **9.0 Supporting Documents**

### Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Woking For All Strategy.

### Background Documents

- 9.2 None.

## **Report Ends**