

Woking Borough Council  
**Woking for all**

Report on achievements  
**2021-2022**

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Shaping the *future*  
of our borough



# A council that works for all



## **Cllr Ayesha Azad**

Leader of Woking  
Borough Council  
and elected member for  
Heathlands

I am delighted that Woking Borough Council has produced the Woking for all strategy for 2022–2027, which followed the one-year Corporate Plan that I established for 2021-2022.

The past year has been challenging for residents and communities of the borough, as well as the borough council. We have continued to live with the impact that COVID-19 has had on how we work and live our lives. The council has used the financial resilience it had established over the past decade to maintain support and service delivery to local residents and businesses that needed it most.

I believe it is really important that as a council we are clear about our objectives and are transparent about how we have performed against these. We have therefore produced this separate report that highlights some of our achievements in the last year and how these align with the objectives that I set out in the Corporate Plan that I established for 2021-2022.

Whilst the following pages provide a good overview of what the council has delivered in 2021-2022, no report can fully capture all activity. It does however provide an overview on how we have performed against the strategic priority outcomes and does establish the principle of being transparent on the council's priorities and what we delivered against these priorities.

This is part of my commitment to improving some of the ways that the council does its business to ensure openness and transparency.

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# A healthy, inclusive and engaged community

Objectives, actions  
and achievements



# Objectives and our planned actions

## Improving the health and wellbeing of all residents

- Working with partners to embed health and wellbeing in all that we do.
- Promoting cultural, environmental and sporting opportunities.
- Supporting independent living and reducing social isolation.

## Reducing social inequality

- Tackling homelessness and its root causes.
- Building high-quality affordable and key worker homes across the borough.
- Working with partners to improve access to services.

## Engaging our communities

- Ensuring residents know who and where to go to discuss or make changes in their community.
- Encouraging residents to volunteer and play a greater role in supporting their communities.
- Helping residents to identify and make use of all the resources available to them.
- Engage with our tenants and leaseholders about the future of housing services.

# What we have achieved

## Improving the health and wellbeing of all residents

### Working with partners to embed health and wellbeing in all that we do

- Delivered door-to-door surge testing to 14,000 households to support national efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19 variants.
- Launched the 'wrap around the resident' multi-agency partnership in Sheerwater to provide a joined-up response to supporting our most vulnerable residents.
- Embedded council staff into Ashford and St Peters Hospital discharge team and supported almost 400 patients to return home safely.

### Promoting cultural, environmental and sporting opportunities

- Opened the new Eastwood Leisure Centre in Sheerwater, including a 25-metre pool with viewing gallery and a teaching pool with a moveable floor, hoist and privacy blinds.
- Refurbished Loop Road play area with accessible equipment for children of all ages and abilities.
- Secured £60,000 funding from British Cycling and started works to update the cycle track at Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground.
- Supported Peer Productions move into the former YPod building and create a youth performing arts hub in the town centre.
- Developed two new football facilities; the Cardinals managed 3G pitch at Woking College and the new home of Sheerwater Football Club at the Eastwood Leisure Centre. Both facilities offer a broad range of football for all, from children to ladies, people with disabilities to walking football.
- In partnership with the SHIFA Project created a cycling project in Sheerwater. The ladies only cycling sessions run from the Tigers Youth Centre and take ladies, who in some cases, have never cycled before, all over the borough. Both the knowledge and the equipment has been provided to allow this to happen.

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## Supporting independent living and reducing social isolation

- Delivered over 55,000 community meals, ensuring vulnerable residents have a hot and nutritious meal each day.
- Reviewed and enhanced our Housing Assistance policy to allow greater flexibility when undertaking works to adapt homes to meet needs.
- Based our Social Prescribing officers in GP surgeries and linked over 1,250 residents, who have social, emotional or practical needs, to a wealth of different services within the borough.
- Installed over 200 new Careline community alarm units so that vulnerable residents and their families know that help is available at the touch of a button.

## Reducing social inequality

### Tackling homelessness and its root causes

- Worked with York Road Project to support 52 rough sleepers into settled accommodation.
- Secured additional government funding to deliver 33 additional homes with support for rough sleepers.
- Opened our new temporary accommodation schemes to support 22 homeless families.

### Building high-quality affordable and key worker homes across the borough

- Delivered a total of 177 new affordable homes across the borough, exceeding our annual target of 102.
- Completed first residential phase of Sheerwater regeneration, including 46 affordable homes.
- Opened our new extra care housing scheme, Hale End Court in Old Woking, providing 48 apartments for vulnerable older people.
- Commenced works on a small development of four new council homes in Rydens Way, Old Woking.

### Working with partners to improves access to services

- Worked with Citizens Advice Woking to distribute £244,000 of Government Household Support Funds to assist vulnerable residents with higher food and utility costs.
- Working with local charity, Foodwise, transformed the former nursery building in Sheerwater into Shopwise, an eco-food shop stocking items, which for various reasons didn't make it onto supermarket shelves, at low prices.

## Engaging our communities

### Ensuring residents know who and where to go to discuss or make changes in their community

- Recruited over 750 residents onto the new Woking Residents' Panel to inform the future of their local area by acting as a sounding board on future initiatives.
- Hosted eight community engagement events around the borough to shape the Woking for all strategy, attended by 145 residents.
- Opened our new temporary accommodation schemes to support 22 homeless families.

### Encouraging residents to volunteer and play a greater role in supporting their communities

- Consulted residents and other stakeholders on our Housing Strategy, Economic Development Action Plan, Planet Woking and Public Spaces Protection Order.
- Registered 449 new volunteers and successfully placed 158 within local charities.
- Piloted new corporate social responsibility offer and connected 82 corporate volunteers over 11 volunteering days in local projects.
- Launched new Volunteer Woking website and Working Together for Woking charity networking event bringing together over 50 local organisations.

### Helping residents to identify and make use of all the resources available to them

- Woking Interpreting and Translation Service completed 783 translation sessions with top languages being Romanian, Polish and Arabic.

### Engage with our tenants and leaseholders about the future of housing services

- Taken feedback from tenants and leaseholders into account when deciding on changes to Housing Services from April 2022 and setting our Housing Strategy.
- Launched Woking@Home, a new tenant and leaseholder newsletter.
- Consulted leaseholders on the new responsive repairs and cleaning contracts.





# **An enterprising, vibrant and sustainable borough**

**Objectives, actions  
and achievements**





# Objectives and our planned actions

## Promoting a strong economy

- Creating a vibrant economic hub bringing together high-quality leisure, retail and residential spaces.
- Supporting businesses to grow, nurturing start-ups and encouraging businesses based outside of the borough to relocate to Woking.
- Supporting our residents, communities and businesses to recover well from the pandemic.

## Improving the borough's biodiversity and green infrastructure

- Helping residents to reduce their carbon footprint and impact on the environment.
- Conserving existing habitats and creating new ones including in our urban areas.
- Preventing flooding and conserving water.

## Sustainable development

- Addressing the borough's infrastructure needs to support development, integrate transport networks and prioritise sustainable travel.
- Promoting and investing in low carbon energy supply across the borough.
- Creating high-quality built environments fit for the future.

# What we have achieved

## Promoting a strong economy

### **Creating a vibrant economic hub bringing together high-quality leisure, retail and residential spaces**

- Provided start-up advice clinics with specialist advisors.
  - Promoted the Woking business directory.
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### **Supporting businesses to grow, nurturing start-ups and encouraging businesses based outside of the borough to relocate to Woking**

- Developed and delivered the Economic Development Action Plan.
  - Appointed a local contractor to deliver a core housing service, which has created local employment opportunities.
  - Offered six one-to-one business support clinics per month, advising businesses on strategy, marketing, IT, finance, accountancy and legal matters.
  - Successfully launched local recruitment initiative, Woking Jobs Board.
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### **Supporting our residents, communities and businesses to recover well from the pandemic**

- Worked with Department for Works and Pensions and Surrey Care Trust to launch an employment hub for 18 to 25 year-olds at Moorcroft Centre for the Community, supporting over 100 young adults with 60 per cent success rate in receiving job outcomes.
  - Distributed circa £25m of business grants and maintained a business advice network.
  - Introduced the Woking Hospitality Alliance, in collaboration with the Department for Works and Pensions and Brooklands College, offering hospitality training.
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## Improving the borough's biodiversity and green infrastructure

### Helping residents to reduce their carbon footprint and impact on the environment

- Delivered a new renewable energy plan.
- Funding agreed for a further two years of Planet Woking, the council's climate and biodiversity communications programme, helping residents reduce their carbon footprint and impact on the environment.

### Conserving existing habitats and creating new ones including in our urban areas

- Lessons learnt disseminated from the first five years of the Woking Great Crested Newt Pilot.
- Continued to work with Surrey Heathland Partnership to restore and manage our internationally important heathland sites.
- Created new green spaces for residents in the Thamesway developments including Podium garden in Canalside and green walls and roof in Middle Walk.

### Preventing flooding and conserving water

- Climate Emergency UK assessed Woking Borough Council as among the top 10 district authorities in the country for our climate and ecological actions across the borough.

## Sustainable development

### Addressing the borough's infrastructure needs to support development, integrate transport networks and prioritise sustainable travel

- Progressed work to expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
- Funding secured from Office for Zero Emission vehicles for installation of EV points in new Red Shoppers Car Park.
- 20 on-street charging bays installed as part of Surrey County Council led pilot.

## **Promoting and investing in low carbon energy supply across the borough**

- Continued to promote Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards in the private rented sector and enforce where necessary.
- Bid for green homes funding to improve private rented stock.
- Fully funded home energy efficiency improvements delivered to households across the borough as part of a Surrey consortium and delivered by Action Surrey.

## **Creating high-quality built environments fit for the future**

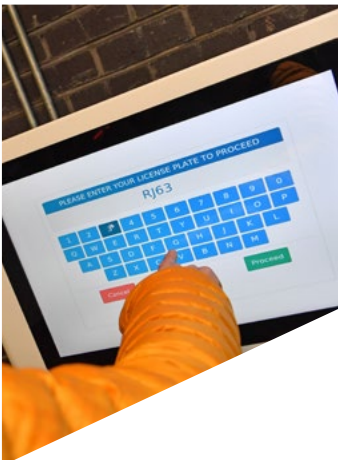
- Incorporated new green living walls and roofs, as part of a number of council and partner developments in the town centre.
- Continued to deliver the Sheerwater Regeneration Scheme, including opening the Eastwood Leisure Centre and first phase of residential homes.





# An innovative, proactive and effective council

Objectives, actions  
and achievements



# Objectives and our planned actions

## Digital first

- Developing Woking as a smart borough, exploiting the opportunities provided by 5G and new technology innovations.
- Creating an online civic space, Woking Community Forum, making it easier for residents to give their views and influence council decisions.
- Modernising working practices and improving residents' digital experience.

## Strengthening partnerships

- Looking for opportunities where we can work collaboratively with our public sector partners to provide holistic and seamless services for residents.
- Helping our voluntary community and faith sector to play a greater role in supporting vulnerable residents.
- Making it easier for others to work with us by creating shared plans and clear and transparent processes.

## Effective use of resources

- Initiating a business review to ensure the council can deliver best value for taxpayers in all that it does.
- Continuing to invest in staff, our greatest resource, by ensuring they have the skills and equipment necessary to perform their roles to the best of their ability.
- Reducing our carbon footprint across our estate and operations.



# What we have achieved

## Digital first

### **Developing Woking as a smart borough, exploiting the opportunities provided by 5G and new technology innovations**

- Established a far reaching Digital Strategy (2022-2025) for the borough focused on digitally empowering residents and businesses and optimising how the council uses digital to work smarter. The Digital Strategy was agreed by council at its meeting on 18 November 2021.
- Delivered bi-monthly social media clinics to advise businesses on digital marketing strategies.
- Introduced an online shopping platform for local retailers in order to safeguard our high streets. The platform enables local suppliers to trade online and offer a home delivery or 'call to collect' service.

### **Creating an online civic space, making it easier for residents to give their views and influence council decisions**

- Developed, launched and maintained the Woking Community Forum online engagement hub to provide easy and intuitive engagement between the council and residents on local priorities.
- Developed and launched a budget balancing interactive feedback tool which captures resident feedback on their priorities for service funding and uses this feedback to inform the budget process.

### **Modernise working practices and improve residents' digital experience**

- Expanded the council's use of Geographical Information System applications, examples being the Woking art trail, Tree Preservation Order and conservation area interactive maps, and annual canvass mobile app.
- Invested in a new Housing Safety and Compliance IT system.

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## Strengthening partnerships

### Looking for opportunities where we can work collaboratively with our public sector partners to provide holistic and seamless services for residents

- Continued to work as an investment partner with Homes England to secure funding for an additional 56 affordable homes.
- Developed a multi-agency hospital discharge team to support vulnerable residents when they leave hospital and move back home.
- Established a number of health services (e.g. physiotherapy, maternity services) into our leisure and community centres.
- Provided awareness sessions on community safety themes, such as anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse, informing the public about support services and where they can get help.

### Helping our voluntary community and faith sector to play a greater role in supporting vulnerable residents

- Provided over £900k of community grant funding for the voluntary sector to support their services.
- Volunteer Woking placed over 150 volunteers in local charities.
- Ran a successful networking event attracting over 50 charities.

### Making it easier for others to work with us by creating shared plans and clear and transparent processes

- Consulted, developed and collaboratively hosted key strategies on Woking Community Forum.
- Refreshed the safeguarding policy in close collaboration with the Surrey Safeguarding Children's and Adult's Partnership Boards.

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## Effective use of resources

### Initiating a business review to ensure the council can deliver best value for taxpayers in all that it does

- A business review was initiated and progress was reported through the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to the council at its meeting on 10 February 2022.
- Established an independent review of the council's financial affairs and reported the review findings and observations at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24 January 2022.
- Established a digital and transformation service within the council and developed a comprehensive digital plan.
- Established a Fit for the Future change programme and £5m savings plan.

### Continuing to invest in staff, our greatest resource, by ensuring they have the skills and equipment necessary to perform their roles to the best of their ability

- Implemented new ways of working technology and supported our workforce to adopt it.
- Continued with our accreditation with Investors in People which is a global benchmark for people management.
- Supported 26 employees to undertake a management qualification and 21 employees to undertake vocational development.
- In the staff employee survey, out of approximately 90 indicators of performance, achieved a year-on-year improvement in 75 per cent of the indicators.

### Reducing our carbon footprint across our estate and operations

- Used the Climate Emergency Action Plan to focus on reducing the council's carbon footprint - an example being the development of a climate change e-learning module for officers and members.
- Funding approved for independent assessment of council's carbon footprint (Executive, Jan 2022) to build on current monitoring and assist in identifying priority actions for carbon reduction.
- Obtained £3.5m government funding to connect two major office buildings in Woking Town Centre to the local heat network.





[www.woking.gov.uk](http://www.woking.gov.uk)