

# Wokingham Borough **NEWS**

Your magazine from Wokingham Borough Council  
Spring 2022



**Two years of helping  
the community  
through Covid-19**



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Our new anti-social behaviour service will launch next month. The team will be on hand seven days a week to tackle issues such as excessive noise and fly-tipping

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Budget 2022/23 – find out how your money is spent on vital services such as adults and children's social care.



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Could you work in adult social care? – it's rewarding and important work. If you're interested, we need to hear from you.

# Welcome

We've now been facing the challenge of Covid-19 for two long years. I want to start this Borough News by expressing my profound sympathy for all those who have been affected by this cruel virus.



Many of you will have lost loved ones, others have lost livelihoods, missed schooling, social occasions or suffered from the stress and strain of living through a pandemic. My thoughts are with you all.

As we, hopefully, emerge from this difficult time, my colleagues and I have a very clear focus: to ensure everybody in Wokingham Borough enjoys the benefits of living in this wonderful place.

Inequality and poverty have always been with us but Covid-19 has exacerbated them in our community and we are determined to meet these twin challenges.

In these pages, you can read about some of the things we have done, such as worked with charities and community groups to form the borough's first Hardship Alliance, created our first Charity and Community Hub that is now home to ten key organisations and supported residents struggling with energy bills through the winter.

We have also worked with partners to create our Equalities Plan and are developing our long-term Anti-Poverty Strategy.

These are huge emerging issues, but they are far from the only challenges we face or only ways we are working for you.

We are proud to have been accepted on the Unicef Child Friendly Cities and Communities programme. We are one of only eight authorities in the country that have been accepted on this programme, which will focus on areas such as anti-bullying, equality, opportunities, health, education, child-friendly services to ensure we put children at centre of all decision making.

Elsewhere, we continue to invest in roads, schools, community and leisure facilities and other improvements for the community as well as improvements to our adult and children's services.

All of this is dependent on sound finances – as many residents elsewhere are sadly finding out, a council that's broke, can't help anybody. Like everywhere else, we do face an uncertain financial future – but we are facing that future from a very strong starting point: our investments are paying off, our budgeting is prudent and our services are efficient. With these basics in place, I am confident we can weather whatever storms come our way and continue to provide you with the services and facilities you deserve.

John Halsall  
Leader of the Council

**Editorial:** Wokingham Borough Council's Communications Engagement & Marketing Team  
**Designed and printed for:** Digital Solutions on Amadeus Gloss 90gsm carbon balanced paper



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# We've heard you: time to tackle anti-social behaviour head on

We know that noisy neighbours, fly-tippers and all those other selfish so-and-sos can blight people's lives – and that's why we're launching a new service to stamp them out.

Our new in-house team will be out and about, when and where the community needs to challenge and prevent those who's inconsiderate and illegal actions cause so much damage to quality of life.

This includes noisy neighbours, fly tipping, nuisance bonfires, abandoned vehicles or bothersome vehicle use including car meets, noise and dust from building sites, unauthorised advertising, mismanagement of waste and unlawful encampments.

The team will also be on the look-out for potential problems such as public drinking or out of control dogs and will focus on 'hot spots', including parks and open spaces or bars and pubs, where problems are often reported.

The team includes an animal warden and food safety officers who'll work with retailers, pubs and restaurants, and a licensing team overseeing alcohol sales, betting shops, arcades and taxis.

## Fly tipping

Dumping rubbish anywhere except a recycling centre is illegal and carries significant penalties. We'll continue cracking down on this and our new team will clean up fly tips, look for evidence of the culprit and prosecute or issue fines. Last year alone, nearly 250 tonnes of waste was cleared from our roads and footpaths and 37 penalties were issued.



## Car Meets

The noise from revving engines and dangerous driving in car parks is upsetting to neighbours and, in partnership with the police, we've reduced the number of car meets in our borough by warning drivers and installing CCTV cameras. Our new team will help the police by gathering information, which could lead to car seizures if owners ignore warnings and handing out fines.



## Parks and open spaces

Our parks and open spaces are there for everyone to enjoy, so we want to know if this is being spoiled by rowdy, nuisance or upsetting behaviour.

## Contact information

If a crime is being committed and people are in danger, call the police on **999** or **101** if it isn't an emergency. For any other nuisance contact us at [asb@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:asb@wokingham.gov.uk), on **0118 974 6000** during business hours. Our out of hours service is available on **0800 212 111** from 5pm until midnight on Fridays and Saturdays and during the daytime at weekends and bank holidays.

**This service is available from 1 April onwards**

# GET OUTSIDE AND ENJOY THE BOROUGH'S GREEN SPACES

We're lucky to have a wide variety of beautiful green spaces across Wokingham Borough - some you may have visited hundreds of times and others you may not have explored yet.

We all know Dinton Pastures Country Park is a great place to visit with something for all the family. Whether you want to enjoy the play park or try your hand at something more adventurous, such as kayaking or archery, there are plenty of exciting activities on offer.

Dinton Pastures' new £2.4 million activity centre opened last year and is Wokingham Borough's first net zero carbon building. If you fancy something a bit more relaxing, you can grab some refreshments from the café at the activity centre, the Dragonfly Café or the Airstream Caravan while taking a walk.



The site is also home to one of the three amazing destination play areas in the borough, with the others at California Country Park, Elms Field in Wokingham town centre.

Our nature parks are great for those who want a bit more peace and quiet- to walk your dogs, cycle or scoot round with the kids, picnic, explore nature, exercise, or to take a nice leisurely stroll. There might be one on your doorstep that you didn't even know about!

Across the borough we have 14 nature parks to the north and south of Wokingham town, at the former Arborfield Garrison, in Shinfield, Barkham, Finchampstead and Crowthorne.

These public green spaces, measuring some 120 hectares in total, or more than 170 football pitches, have been funded by developers building new homes in the area thanks to our strategic approach to development.

## New Cantley Park play area

As we go to print, we are expecting the new destination play area at Cantley Park, Wokingham, to open to the public soon.

The £450,000 play area replaces the previous equipment and can be found near the tennis courts and café. Like our nature parks, it has been funded by housing developers under conditions we imposed to help improve local communities.

This innovative new addition has been designed to appeal to a wide age range, including teenagers as well as younger children, and will be inclusive with wheelchair-accessible equipment. The design encourages all children and families to play together in carefully laid out play zones.

One of its special features is the interactive equipment by Yalp, which is designed to make playing outside as engaging as gaming- but without the screen time. Check our website for more information.



# Our response to the

Covid-19 has created challenges we could never have planned for. Despite this, our teams have worked at pace to support our communities and keep essential services running over the last two years. As we reflect on this time, we can all look back and be proud of what we've achieved.

## Immediate response

Overnight, we worked with the local voluntary and community sector, including hundreds of volunteers, to set-up support for the most vulnerable whilst they shielded at home.

From a food distribution hub at St Crispin's Leisure Centre which sent out 2,000 packages in its first two months, to home delivery of prescriptions and direct calls to vulnerable residents. Working in partnership was crucial.

The community spirit across the borough did not go unrecognised. People checked in on their neighbours, set-up dedicated support groups on social media and went above and beyond to keep together while we were apart. Visit our website and search 'Covid-19 Roll of Honour' for a list of just some of people who have gone above and beyond.

## Self-isolation and testing

A dedicated council-run test and trace team was set-up to help target individuals that the national service couldn't reach. Our teams have made nearly 8,000 calls; checking in on people, signposting them to help through the One Front Door, and reminding them about support payments if they were unable to work.

We also set-up lateral flow testing sites for key workers in January 2021, opening these up to the wider community a few months after. At the time of writing, nearly 35,000 tests had been processed on site by the team and 47,000 home testing kits given to the public.

In June 2021, we ran a surge testing programme, following the rapid spread of the Delta variant in the borough. This was a huge team effort, with over 20,000 tests complete and nearly 15,000 residential properties visited to help raise awareness. 8,000 test kits were also delivered to schools, nurseries, pre-schools and businesses.

We're so thankful to our communities for following the guidance.

## Supporting with the vaccine programme

Since the Covid-19 vaccination programme started in December 2020, we've worked closely with the NHS to support with practical elements of the rollout and encourage the local community to have their vaccines.

From helping with signage, car parking and providing staff for local vaccine centres, to hosting the NHS Health on the Move Covid-19 vaccine bus and signposting to important information on our social media channels.

In June 2021, we also worked with NHS partners to run the surge vaccine programme over a two-week period at Bulmershe Leisure Centre. During this time, a staggering 4,000 over 18s were vaccinated.



# Covid-19 pandemic



## Helping the community and local businesses

You may have seen our Covid Support Officers around the borough. They've been promoting best practice, carrying out mobile and foot patrols in town centres and other areas, signposting members of the public to nearby Covid-19 testing facilities and providing other important guidance.

We've also helped organisations access Covid-19 grants from Central Government. Millions has been paid out to local businesses that have been impacted by ongoing restrictions, acting as a lifeline in difficult times.

## Keeping children and vulnerable adults safe

Our Adult Social Care Covid-19 Taskforce has provided vital support to our care homes and their residents across the borough, ensuring they stay as safe as possible.

From daily calls to share information and assist with any issues and concerns; to supporting with risk assessments, problem solving and testing; the dedicated team has acted swiftly to put support in place when needed.

Our Children's Covid-19 Taskforce have also gone above and beyond to support schools and pre-schools/nurseries during the pandemic. They are in daily contact with headteachers by phone, email, and virtual meetings; providing advice, guidance, and important information to share with parents and guardians.

## Remembering the pandemic: Covid Legacy Project

We know the last two years have been tough for so many people. But we've also come together in ways we've never done before.

To capture the experiences of our communities during the pandemic, and to provide a platform for residents to discuss their shared experiences of living through the uncertainty of 2020 and 2021, we've launched a community display in local libraries and are encouraging people to contribute.

We want to hear your thoughts and experiences – how did you get through the lockdowns? How did you stick together while we were apart? Did you learn any new hobbies? Please email any anecdotes and photos to [CEM@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:CEM@wokingham.gov.uk).

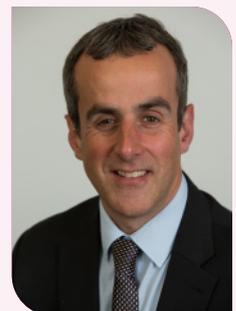
*\*All stats correct as of 04.02.22*

## Executive View

**Cllr Charles Margetts, executive member for health, well-being and adult services**

"The pandemic has brought great sadness and suffering to many people. But I am proud of the way to community has responded.

We have tried to play our part as the local council and have been amazed at the resilience of our population and strength of the voluntary and community sector with whom we have worked."



# Tackling domestic abuse in the borough

Together with more than forty local partners, we are proud to announce our **Domestic Abuse Strategy (2021-2024)** to support victims, survivors and their families living in Wokingham Borough.

Our strategy sets out approaches for providing support to domestic abuse victims and their children in the borough, holding perpetrators to account and working towards long-term wellbeing.

Early intervention, particularly in schools, will be addressed to help educate and influence values in childhood and adolescence, as well as shifting attitudes to become less accepting of violence and abuse.

## Executive View

**Executive member for neighbourhood and communities Cllr Bill Soane said,**

“I am delighted to announce this pro-active working partnership to support victims, survivors and their families living in Wokingham Borough. We have a zero tolerance against domestic abuse and we are working closely with our partners to deliver our strategy whilst challenging and changing this behaviour.”



## Home refuge scheme

The home refuge scheme is available to victims in privately owned, rented, council or housing association homes where they are no longer living with their abuser. The scheme offers home security adaptations for example door and window alarms, video doorbell, security light and a flap-lock letter box.

The scheme is in response to victim-survivors who have told us they would prefer to remain in their own homes, where this is safe and possible.

For more information, visit: [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) and search for 'Domestic abuse'.

Support is available for all victim-survivors, children and those who want to change their behaviour, through the Wokingham Domestic Abuse Service delivered by Cranstoun **(0118) 402 1921**. If you are in danger, call **999**.

# Working through our Equalities Action Plan

Last year we published our Equality Plan, which set out practical ways that we can work with partners and the community to tackle inequality. Let's look at some of the key achievements from the last 12 months:

We've marked important awareness events like Black History Month and LGBT+ History Month, with displays and virtual activities across our library service.

Across our Domestic Abuse service, we've worked with incredible organisations like SupportU+ and Us Too to train colleagues and partners on supporting community members with protected characteristics.

We're giving young people in the borough a voice through a new Youth Council, providing a platform to discuss important issues and feedback on our work.

Our School Improvement Team has been working closely with local schools and partners to provide training for staff on tackling unconscious racial bias.

We've set up a Residents Equality Forum, providing representatives from local community groups with a platform to respond to hot topics.

Fifty-three Wokingham Borough councillors have signed CLASP's Hate Crime Charter to show their support against hate crimes aimed at people with learning disabilities in the local community.

There is so much work to be done, but we're glad to be making steps in the right direction.

# ROADS ROUND-UP



## SOUTH WOKINGHAM DISTRIBUTOR ROAD

We've opened the latest section of a major road which will provide access to planned new homes while relieving congestion.

The Eastern Gateway, part of our South Wokingham Distributor Road, was built in partnership with Balfour Beatty and funded by housing developers plus a grant from the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

It will serve our South Wokingham major development where 2,500 high-quality homes are set to be built, including 1,840 south of the railway line.

The road links William Heelas Way, another section of the distributor road on the Montague Park development, with a new roundabout on Waterloo Road. It includes a new bridge across the railway to replace the level crossing at Clay Lane which will permanently close.

It also offers a safe, welcoming route for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, making active, sustainable travel more attractive.

As well as tackling disruption by reducing vehicle trips and increasing road capacity, the finished distributor road will help residents live healthier lives, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions to tackle the climate emergency.

It will eventually link between the new roundabout and Finchampstead Road near Tesco. Access at that end will be via the planned Western Gateway.

## NORTH WOKINGHAM DISTRIBUTOR ROAD

The North Wokingham Distributor Road, is almost complete with the final sections west of Old Forest Road and at Toutley Road due to finish in April. The penultimate section at Ashridge Farm, including a new nature park, is now complete and will open as soon as possible.

## NINE MILE RIDE EXTENSION

The Nine Mile Ride extension at the former Arborfield Garrison, which forms the main route through the new community, should also finish shortly. The northern half is already complete and Balfour Beatty is wrapping up the southern extension.

These projects are all part of our £250 million major new highways initiative.

## WINNERSH RELIEF ROAD

The Winnersh Relief Road, which opened in May 2021, connects Lower Earley Way to the A329 Reading Road via a new roundabout. It relieves traffic on the main Winnersh crossroads and will connect with the new North Wokingham Distributor Road once it opens this summer. The scheme has been well received as it reduces peak hour congestion by providing an alternative route and reducing journey times on the A329. It also encourages active travel through new cycle lanes and footpaths.





## Working with the Hardship Alliance to tackle poverty

Poverty has existed for generations in society but has now increased because of the Covid-19 pandemic. More people are experiencing poverty, and many of those that were previously in it are being pushed further into debt and increased hardship.

As a council, we are here to support our communities in every way possible, and our partners across the voluntary and community sector are also doing an amazing job to help those most in need.

Together, we want to build on the support that's already out there and tackle key issues so we can prevent poverty and support people out of it. That's why we've created a Hardship Alliance with four leaders from our voluntary and community sector – First Days, Citizens Advice Wokingham, AgeUK Berkshire and Wokingham United Charities.

We're working in partnership on a new Anti-Poverty Strategy for Wokingham Borough, which will be published this spring. It will be underpinned by an annual action plan to address the immediate impacts felt by residents, and to ultimately move more people out of poverty.

### Helping residents reduce their energy bills

Soaring energy prices are impacting many of our residents, pushing them towards fuel poverty where a high proportion of their income needs to go towards paying their energy bills; leaving them struggling to make ends meet. This is increasingly hard for those living on low incomes or in older properties which may not perform as well.

That's why we're making sure support is available to help residents make their properties more energy efficient, reduce the cost of running their home and cut their carbon emissions as well.

Since it launched in October 2020 our Help to Heat scheme has already helped over 1,300 residents install free, or low cost, insulation to their homes. And we hope to support many more as the scheme remains open to new applications.

We've also launched the new Green Homes Grant (GHG LAD2) which provides free grants to help residents on low incomes and living in low energy efficient properties make a wide range of improvements to their homes. This includes installing solid wall insulation, solar panels, or even air source heat pumps and improved glazing.

You can find out more about eligibility and how to apply for these schemes by searching for ECO Flex on our website [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk)

## Welcoming girls into Year 7 from 2023



With 40 years' experience teaching girls, Reading Blue Coat is excited to extend its Co-Ed provision to welcome girls into Year 7 from September 2023.

**Open Morning:  
Saturday 7 May  
2022**



READING BLUE COAT

Register your attendance at  
[rbc.org.uk](https://rbc.org.uk)

An Independent Day School for Boys and  
Girls 11-18

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Yateley Manor

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# A big thumbs up for Wokingham

Anyone heading into Wokingham town centre during the past few years will have seen how it's continued to change with projects such as the regeneration as well as the Market Place improvement works.



The regeneration aimed to help Wokingham adapt to changes in how people use town centres as well as help it cater to a growing population with development at the edges of the town

After seeing several private developments fail, the council decided to take control itself, making sure the project could be a success and incorporate things residents had told us they wanted to see, such as a focus on independents and boutique businesses, new public spaces and a large open space.

Since starting on the regeneration we've refurbished the buildings above Clarks and Boots, built a new 529 space multi-storey car park at Carnival and completed mixed use developments at Peach Place and Elms Field. Including new shops and businesses, an Everyman cinema, Aldi Foodstore, Premier Inn hotel and homes.

We've also installed new public toilets, water refill fountains, and lots of cycle parking alongside great pedestrianised spaces including the Peach Place square, and the landscaped park and destination play area at Elms Field.

Work on the new Carnival Hub, the final phase of the regeneration, started on site in spring 2020 with the demolition of the old Carnival Pool building and is continuing quickly, with the new facility set to open later this summer.

The Hub is sure to prove another hit with residents and includes a much larger leisure centre, with swimming pools, splash pad, spa, fitness suite, studios and a four court sports hall as well as a café and a new and improved home for Wokingham library. The Hub is also being fitted out to make it the perfect venue for community and arts events with bleacher seating in the sports hall along with lighting, sound equipment and a modular stage.

During the last couple of years, the regeneration has proven a big winner when it comes to awards, picking up multiple wins from respected professional bodies including the RTPI, APSE, Thames Valley Property and the SPACES awards. It's even attracted international recognition winning the European award for mixed use development from the Urban Land Institute as well.

And it's not just us and the professionals who think the regeneration is a great thing.

Earlier this year we asked residents to share their feedback about the regeneration projects at Elms Field, Peach Place and Carnival, and they gave it a big thumbs up, with 72% of people saying they thought the regeneration had made the town a more attractive place to visit.



# Wokingham regeneration

The main improvements they noted included the creation of new pedestrianised spaces with seating to relax or meet friends, the improved choice of places to eat and drink, the general appearance of the town and things to do such as the new cinema as well as creating a bigger town with more facilities in general. People also mentioned the quality of places to eat, drink and shop as well as elements like the new play area in Elms Field.

They also suggested a range of other things they'd like to see in the town, including ideas for new shops, as well as larger markets, events and entertainment at Peach Place and Elms Field, alongside identifying other parts of the town they felt could benefit from more work.

There was a lot of support for the self-funding approach used to pay for the town centre regeneration with many feeling it was a model which could be used elsewhere in the borough. The approach meaning that, rather than relying on taxpayer funds, the regeneration has been paid for by a mix of income from selling homes built on the site and rents from the new businesses. With excess rental income already coming back to the council and being used to fund important services for residents living across the borough and not just in Wokingham town.

Feedback was also sought from people about how the projects were delivered and asked whether there were things they felt had worked well or could have been done differently at the time. A range of useful ideas were shared and we will be using these to help us improve how we roll out future projects elsewhere.

## Executive View

**Cllr Stuart Munro, Executive Member for Business and Economic Development:**

“Shopping and high streets are continuing to evolve so it's important we can help our local centres adapt and thrive

Feedback from our local residents and businesses has been great and its something we will be looking to continue to work into our plans, not just in Wokingham town centre, but also as we continue to invest in new infrastructure projects and facilities across the borough for years to come.”



# Plan to eliminate rough sleeping

We are set out to eliminate rough sleeping in Wokingham Borough within the next three years by continuing the hugely successful work it started during the coronavirus pandemic.

Since March 2020 we have worked with partners to place almost 100 people who were sleeping on the streets, or in danger of doing so, in temporary accommodation and it expects to reach this figure by the end of next month. And we have applied for Government funding to continue these efforts until 2025, during which time we hope to reduce rough sleeping to zero and is expecting a decision in April.

At the beginning of the outbreak, the council work, in partnership with other agencies, those who were struggling and then finding places for them to stay. Everyone in need was offered a roof over their head and, since that time, no-one who received help has returned to long-term rough sleeping in the borough.

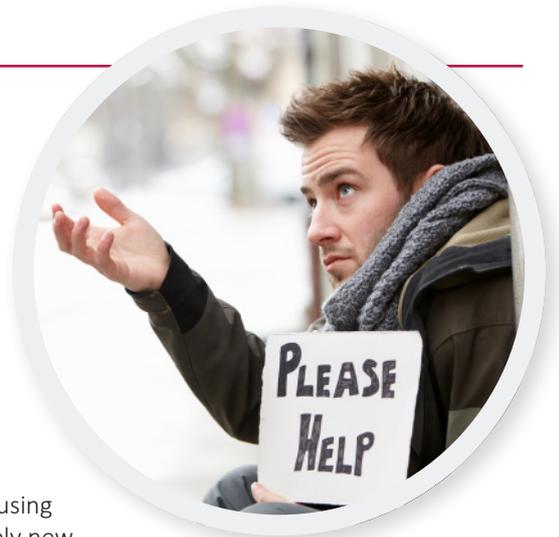
The work was carried out initially by our own homelessness team and then with support from Two Saints, who were commissioned to provide an outreach service and visited rough sleepers on the streets to explain the help available and encourage them take it up.

The service also helps people to stay in accommodation by guiding them towards welfare and employment support, help with budgeting and health services including GP practices, mental health and substance misuse advice and covid-19 vaccinations, which they were offered as a priority.

At the height of the pandemic there were 37 former or potential future rough sleepers in temporary accommodation but the figure has been less than half that in recent months.

The council has also launched its first permanent Housing First service for former rough sleepers by purchasing four flats with Government funding which are now let. Housing First is a relatively new housing and support service which gives people who have experienced homelessness and have chronic health and social care needs a stable home from which to rebuild their lives. Intensive, person-centred, and holistic support is provided by Two Saints. Housing First has so far been a great success and the council is now looking at ways of expanding this service to help more of its most vulnerable homeless people access stable accommodation and support.

The work is part of our wider rough homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, which aims to fight the problem at its roots through a raft of measures including early intervention, building more affordable homes, supporting vulnerable residents and creating housing and job opportunities.



# Focussing on what matters to you

We are all about **'what is strong, not what is wrong'** in adult social care. Our staff have always put customers at the centre of their social care journey, exploring with them what they want to achieve in their lives. We refer to this as **'a strengths-based practice or approach'**.

This approach starts with exploring a person's personal network of family, friends, neighbours and the wider local community to identify where informal support and care can help them to help themselves and remain independent.

Strengths based working is also about working with our care providers, partners in health and the local voluntary and community sector to ensure a joined up and proactive approach to social care, making our customers' experience and journey with us as good as it possibly can be.

Our Adult Social Care team feel this approach is really making a difference to our residents. They said:

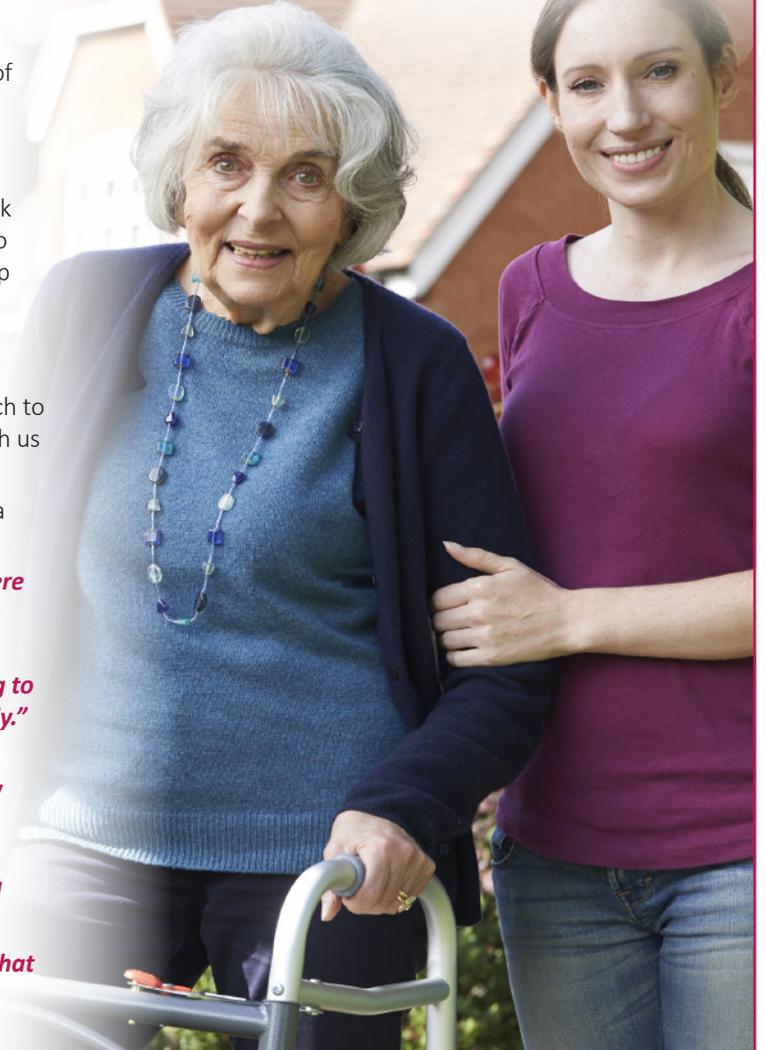
***"Customer felt listened to and her interests and strengths were considered in support planning, making a good match with support provider."***

***"The customer is looking at going back to college, he is going to have travel training so that he can travel there independently."***

***"The impact was good because I managed to promote safety and independence at home and reduce reliance on my customer's husband."***

***"By providing equipment this will keep the customer safe and independent with regards to mobility, personal care and transfers."***

***"Carer feels more able to ask for help. Our customer knows that we are there to help [even] if only for advice."***



## ANNUAL REVIEW

Just before the start of the pandemic Wokingham Borough set out its vision to create "A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business".

Despite dealing with Covid-19 and supporting the community, we have continued to focus on this vision and the strategic priorities that underpin it:

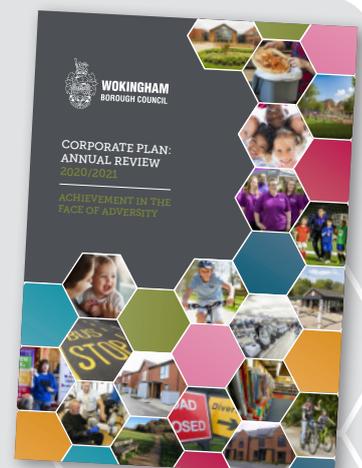
-  **SAFE, STRONG COMMUNITIES**
-  **ENRICHING LIVES**
-  **RIGHT HOMES, RIGHT PLACE**
-  **KEEPING THE BOROUGH MOVING**
-  **A CLEAN GREEN BOROUGH**

An annual review of progress published earlier this year sets out how we have made progress towards these priorities during 2020/21.

Our key performance indicators (KPIs) show how we are performing against our priorities and statutory obligations. We have 59 KPIs, of which 55 were above or near target for the year 2020/21 despite the impact of Covid-19. The targets that were not being met, were those directly being affected by Covid-19 such as library and leisure centre usage.

The full report and an appendix that set out some of the ways we are continue delivery against the vision in 2021/22 on can be read on the website

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



# BUDGET BREAKDOWN

## 2022/23

### WHAT YOUR MONEY IS SPENT ON

This is how we will be dividing up our £144,654,880 budget this year:

**Adult social care  
and wellbeing**



**39%**

**Children's social care  
and safeguarding**



**22%**

**Environmental services**  
(including waste and recycling and grass cutting)



**12%**

**Highways and transport**



**7%**

**Democratic process**  
(elections and members' meetings)



**10%**

**Other frontline services**  
(including libraries and community development)



**8%**

Note: Debt charges and investment income: 2%

Visit [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) (search 'medium term financial plan' for a full breakdown)

### WHAT DO WE SPEND OUR MONEY ON?

Did you know the majority of our money is spent on statutory services? We have growing costs year-on-year because of more residents and increased demand on services.

## EXECUTIVE VIEW

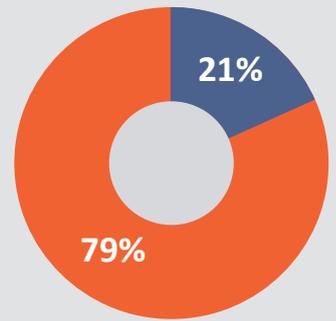
### CLlr John Kaiser, Executive Member for Finance and Housing

“This budget is cautious, but I am pleased to say we won’t be cutting any services. We’ve tried to either keep fees and charges to a minimum or where possible, not increased them to help the borough’s economy recover. We also have ambitions to invest to improve our services, meet the needs of the most vulnerable and invest significantly in our community. We will also be prioritising social housing and delivery more homes at social rent.”



## BUDGET 2022/23 - £132 MILLION

- Non-statutory services**  
e.g. leisure, parks and open spaces, and bus subsidies
- Statutory services**  
e.g. adult social care, children’s services, waste collection and disposal, and highways



## WHERE OUR MONEY COMES FROM



\*Note: Each year the Council makes an allowance of non-collection of Council Tax. If the Council then exceeds its collection target, this surplus is applied the following year to support the revenue budget. This is only 0.35% of the total budget and so is not shown in this table.

## HOW MUCH COUNCIL TAX DO YOU PAY WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL?

### ON A BAND D PROPERTY:

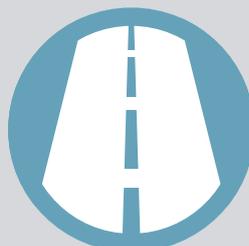


### The everyday services this pays for includes:

12.3 million refuse & recycling collections



Inspecting & maintaining 450 miles of highways & paths



Maintaining 143 miles of public rights of way



Corporate parent to 213 children & care leavers



Providing long term care to 1,556 vulnerable adults



# First step on our journey to become a UNICEF Child Friendly Community

We're excited to announce that we've been successful in our application to join a global campaign led by The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to uphold and protect children's rights in everything we do.

On 1 February, we formally began our journey towards becoming recognised as a UNICEF Child Friendly Community, an initiative which aims to give all children a meaningful say in decisions that shape their lives, whether on services such as libraries or more specialist interventions for children in our care.

We're one of just eight councils in the UK to be accepted and it will take between three to five years before we're fully accredited.

UNICEF said our passion for giving the borough's children and young people the best possible opportunities was the main reason for our acceptance.

Once work starts, we'll aim to earn a series of "badges" for achievements in areas such as anti-bullying, equality, opportunities, health, education, child-friendly services and more.

We plan to work more closely with all our partners to unite the community around children and involve them more in how we operate.

As a first step towards this we have set up a youth council, which consists of 38 students aged 11 to 17 from all secondary schools across the borough, offering young people a voice and platform to debate issues that matter to them and guide us on our strategies and plans.

The youth council has formed subcommittees on topics including diversity, climate change, LGBTQ+ rights, mental health and social mobility, which are open to all secondary school aged young people in the borough.

As part of our work with UNICEF, we will also seek to enhance preventative programmes which reach our most vulnerable children and help them make a positive contribution to community life.

We'd love to hear from you if you're interested in supporting the UNICEF programme or would like to get involved with the youth council subcommittees. Contact us at:

[youthvoice@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:youthvoice@wokingham.gov.uk)

## Are you inspired to learn a new skill or improve how you manage your money?

Did you know that we offer adult education courses?

Designed to give you skills, knowledge and confidence for work and life, courses are open to all residents aged 19+ who live in the borough (subject to eligibility).

Courses include digital skills for home and work, English for beginners and intermediate, mental health and wellbeing, home management and money management and supporting your child's learning.

» To find out more and book, visit our website [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) and search 'adult education'.



## Could you foster a child?

Clive and Kristin have been fostering with us for nearly five years. After raising their own child who has special needs, they realised they had the skills, knowledge, and aptitude to become foster carers.

*“You learn an extraordinary amount about yourself as well as the people you’re caring for,”* they said.

For Clive and Kristin, being active members of the community is a huge part of their life. They said: “If you’re part of Wokingham, you’re part of the community of Wokingham and I can’t imagine doing anything more important than helping to raise the children of Wokingham, particularly those most in need.

*“Being a foster carer for Wokingham Borough Council, you are surrounded by a very committed, professional group of people and I am very proud to be connected with them and proud to have them as part of my circle as they really do the best for children.”*



*“If you’ve been a child in care, your chances of success educationally and professionally are vastly diminished. I knew that between us we had something that we could offer in that regard.”*

*“Fostering has taught me how to be more patient, not just with the people around me, but with myself. I have learnt to forgive myself, as the more you can forgive yourself and accept what’s happening as absolutely valid, the stronger you are as a person, therefore the better you are for those children you are fostering.”*



Would you like to find out more about being a foster carer with us?

Visit <https://fostering.wokingham.gov.uk> where you can find more information.

## Holiday activity and food programme extended for three years

We are excited to announce that our Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme has been extended for a further three years.

The programme launched during the Easter holidays in 2021, however, due to Covid, we started running the full activity offer in summer 2021, providing eligible children (who are in receipt of benefits-related free school meals) and children referred to the programme by a professional the opportunity to attend fun activities and enjoy a healthy meal during school holidays.

So far, more than 700 children have attended activities for primary, secondary and those with special educational needs and disabilities, and more than 14,000 meals have been provided.

We have been able to deliver an extensive programme by working in partnership with 21 local organisations,

voluntary groups and the council’s community engagement team.

There is something for everyone to enjoy, including soft play, gaming, sports, circus workshops, drama, music production, make-up and effects, story writing, video editing and outdoor adventures.

One parent told us: *“My kids have never had a summer like this and opportunities to do the things they did on their clubs. I met amazing people through my youngest child’s stay and play sessions for children who have additional needs. I’m so grateful we got to take part in it.”*



## Executive View

**Cllr Graham Howe, executive member for children’s services**

“The UNICEF Child Friendly Cities and Communities Programme is already reaching almost 30 million children in more than 40 countries, with more joining all the time.

“We’re passionate about giving children and young people a say in their lives and communities, and we’re delighted to be part of the UNICEF programme.”





# New charity and community hub opens its doors

The Wokingham Charity and Community Hub has officially opened and is the new home for 10 charities and organisations.

The Hub is based in Wokingham town centre at Waterford House, and reception is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. It's now open for drop-ins for the public to seek advice, help and support, while appointments can be booked by calling **(0118) 228 0480** or emailing [reception@vcshub.co.uk](mailto:reception@vcshub.co.uk)

The charities now calling the hub home are:

- Involve (which is managing the hub)
- Cranstoun Wokingham
- Home Start Wokingham District
- Health Watch Wokingham Borough
- The Link Visiting Scheme
- Mind in Berkshire
- CLASP
- Promise Inclusion (Pinc)
- Wokingham Volunteer Centre
- Wokingham Foodbank
- Citizen's Advice Wokingham are already located at Waterford House on the second floor and are also part of the hub

This will help deliver our VCS Strategy 2020-2025 priorities, specifically to work in partnership and build the capacity of the VCS, whilst commissioning services in line with strategic priorities that deliver quality and value for money. The Wokingham Charity and Community Hub is a key service as outlined in the voluntary and community sector strategy, agreed in 2020.



Waterford House has been redesigned to create suitable office, breakout and meeting room space for the voluntary, charity and community organisations moving into the building. This has included new carpets, ceilings and fittings and improved ventilation to some rooms in response to Covid-19 best practice.

This new hub builds on the positive partnership developed between us and the voluntary and community sector during the Covid-19 pandemic. It brings several organisations under one roof and it will provide high-quality information, advice and support to enable people to access the right services to meet their individual needs and circumstances at the right time.

# Helping to deliver the affordable homes local residents need

The past few years have been hard for many residents, with the pandemic and continuing increases in the cost of living and fuel impacting on their finances and forcing them to make tough decisions on how to make ends meet, and an increasing number at risk of poverty and homelessness.

It's important that the council can provide the high-quality homes residents need across the borough, not just to meet a growing demand but also to make existing properties more energy efficient and cost effective to run and maintain.

That's why we're investing heavily in an ongoing programme of improvement works to our existing council homes, with a range of works such as loft and cavity wall insulation, as well as some early pilot schemes to test renewable energy sources.

We're also taking an active role in building a range of new affordable homes to help meet demand. This includes shared ownership properties, which can help people take their first step onto the property ladder or support families in buying a larger home than they might otherwise be able to afford; key worker housing, which allows people working in key roles like healthcare and the police to rent properties at a reduced rate; along with traditional social rent homes for those on the council's housing list.

To do this we're working closely with Loddon Homes, our fully owned housing company, to deliver schemes across the

borough, as well as incorporating affordable housing into our own proposals for developments at sites such as Winnersh Farm and Toutley East, both of which are in the planning stage.

We're also working hard to roll out flagship projects, such as the regeneration of Gorse Ride, which is seeing us replace existing dated properties with brand new energy efficient homes.

Arnett Avenue, the first phase of the regeneration finished last summer in partnership with Loddon Homes, consists of 46 new homes, three of which were sold to help offset the cost of development, and the remainder split between shared ownership and social rent.

The second phase of the Gorse Ride regeneration will see 178 existing dated properties replaced with 249 new energy efficient homes, 74% of which will be affordable. Work is already well underway with the majority of residents affected by the initial work already rehoused and the site being cleared and prepared for main construction to begin this summer.



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# Getting creative at Cantley Park

Since opening in September 2021 the Cantley Pavilion has been a hit with residents, offering improved changing facilities, a fantastic café, and function rooms which can be hired out for events.

The past months have also seen the Pavilion become a hub of creativity as the council rolls out a new programme of art, craft and culture courses for residents to enjoy.

Running on Thursday mornings and afternoons, the short new courses are the perfect opportunity to come along, meet people and learn some new skills in a fun and relaxed environment.

The list of workshops continues to change throughout the year and includes a range of fun activities including candle making, needlecraft skills and floral wreath making, as well as painting, printmaking and Japanese brush calligraphy.

The courses are open to anyone to attend whether a complete beginner or someone looking to improve existing skills. Prices to attend the different courses vary and include all materials.

Details of the latest courses can be found on the Council's website

Or on the Council's Eventbrite page, or by downloading the WOCCA arts and culture app to your mobile phone.



## Boost For Prevention Services

Wokingham Borough Council has boosted its adult social care prevention programme working with the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) with an additional £280,000 to £2.1million.

The council is committed to prevention services to help people improve their health and wellbeing and so reduce or delay the need for formal care and support.

Following a robust procurement process, some 28 prevention service contracts have been awarded to the VCFS and contracts will be in place by April 2022.

The funding has been allocated across a wide range of prevention services including wellbeing and mental health support, dementia support, social isolation, emergency respite, home from hospital, gardening and handyperson services and advocacy services to name just a few. There are also contracts to support those residents with learning

disabilities, hearing and sight impairments, carers and young carers.

This latest £280,000 investment is in addition to the grants and contracts worth £1.8 million awarded in 2021 with VCFS organisations to provide prevention services to adults, bringing the total investment in this area to £2.1million.

The voluntary and community sector strategy priorities include specifically working in partnership and building capacity of the VCFS, whilst commissioning services in-line with strategic priorities that deliver quality and value for money.

# High scores for climate emergency action plan

Up against all local authorities, many with larger teams and more resources, we have been awarded a remarkable eighth place for our Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) by Climate Emergency UK, an independent organisation aiming to support local authorities in their climate goals.

Climate Emergency UK scored the action plans of local authorities right across the country, a total of 325, against 28 questions, including how well councils' plans would mitigate the impact of climate change locally, whether climate and ecological emergency was integrated into existing policies, community engagement, climate education, scale of emissions targets and commitments to tackle the ecological emergency.

We scored very highly across all the focus areas with an overall score of 79 per cent, the average being 50 per cent. We got full marks in four areas:

- Co-benefits of climate action and the public health risks of climate change.
- Education, skills and training
- Ecological emergency
- Governance, development and funding, where we were the only council to get full marks.

» Full results for all councils in the UK and the full methodology can be found here [www.councilclimatescorecards.uk](http://www.councilclimatescorecards.uk)

## Executive View

**Executive member for resident services, communications and emissions Cllr Gregor Murray**



"To have our Climate Emergency Action Plan rated in the top ten in the country is a great achievement. And we are putting the plan into action with tree planting, solar panel investment and waste reduction among other things. We also want to hear more ideas from residents via our deliberative process and ongoing engagement."

## Let's Talk Climate

At the beginning of the year, we launched Let's Talk Climate; a community deliberative process designed to unite the community around the climate emergency and give you a say in influencing how we collectively address the challenges into the future.

Community deliberative processes are run by independent, experienced facilitators and involve peer group discussions following on from a presentation of evidence. Let's Talk Climate will be looking at our climate emergency action plan and talking about ways we can all reduce our carbon footprint.

Once a consensus is reached, recommendations are reviewed, and e-panels will take place with a wider number of community members to discuss the recommendations and share further thoughts and ideas.

» To keep up to date with Let's Talk Climate and for opportunities to get involved, please visit <https://engage.wokingham.gov.uk/>



## Hundreds of residents register to help us green up the borough by planting trees

In November 2021, to coincide with National Tree Week, we launched our Garden Forest Scheme, inviting residents across the borough to apply for a free tree, or trees, to plant in their garden. This proved popular, with nearly 2,000 trees applied for by over 800 residents.

The Garden Forest Scheme is part of a wider tree project, which launched in 2021 as part of our climate emergency action plan.

The tree project aims to provide a clearer and more consistent way that trees are managed, as well as increasing the number of trees across the borough.



## Developing a strategy

The project will see the development of a tree strategy, which will outline how trees are managed across the borough.

The details of the strategy are being developed, and after initial consultation in 2021, they will have further opportunities to share thoughts and opinions the project develops. Parts that could be covered in the strategy include:

- Developer commitments
- Tree protection orders
- The ratio of native and non-native trees planted
- Maintenance of existing trees
- Plans for planting new trees

## Greening the borough

Over the next five years, we will plant 250,000 trees across the borough to increase carbon sequestration rates, a process whereby the trees will draw excess CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and store it.

The project is supported by The Woodland Trust, with a £300,000 grant as part of their Emergency Tree Fund.

Trees will be planted in a variety of places across the borough, including council owned land, privately owned land, community spaces and private gardens.

## Reduce your waste – we need to do better

We've looked at what gets put out in the blue rubbish bags - 24% is food waste, 30% are things that can be recycled, and only 46% is actual rubbish.

Putting food waste in the blue bags contributes 500 tonnes per month to the waste we have to pay to dispose of, which is expensive for council tax payers and bad for the environment.

Food waste in blue bags rots and releases harmful gases like methane. When you recycle it, your food waste goes to an Anaerobic Digestion processing facility which captures the methane and turns it into energy to power local homes and produces a fertiliser used in farming.

Recycling materials, such as glass, metal and plastics, saves money because it costs less to recycle waste than it does to dispose of it. It also conserves precious resources and saves energy by making products out of recycled materials.

Recycle more and feed your food caddy. We're in this together - let's all play our part.

To get more green recycling bags or food waste caddies/liners visit our collection hubs during the opening hours.

» You can find these by searching 'collection hubs' on [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk).

## Wokingham Blue Bag Waste Composition

### 30% Recyclable materials

Such as plastics, glass, metal and textiles

### 24% Food waste

### 46% Non-recyclable waste





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**Services**

- Shopping
- Housework
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- One off cleans
- Outings
- Appointments
- Activities

Full list of services available online

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**Debbie**  
debbie@flair-homehelp.co.uk  
07904 488 790 or 0118 375 4784

**Mary**  
07745 226 179  
9.00 am - 5.00 pm




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## MAKING THE BOROUGH MORE CYCLE FRIENDLY

We're working on our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan to set out the improvements we want to make in future and the places where these are needed.



Under the new plan, schemes will be brought forward when funding becomes available, with the details to be decided at that stage. We aren't required to produce the plan but doing so will make it easier for us to apply for grants.

We're also hoping to consult on a new Local Transport Plan, outlining policies for all means of getting where you need to go. We'll announce more once the Government updates its guidance on producing these, which is expected soon.

This ties to our ongoing Local Plan Update, which continues our strong commitment to active, sustainable travel so we'll be supporting as many opportunities as possible for cycling, walking and using public transport.

Meanwhile, our My Journey Wokingham team continues to promote these alternatives by visiting schools and organising events and competitions to get people pedalling, walking or wheeling whenever they can.

### Executive View

**Cllr Pauline Jorgensen, executive member for highways and transport:**

"We're proud of our investment in these initiatives, which encourage walking and cycling for work or leisure.

"This includes our growing greenways network plus cycle paths elsewhere, helping to reduce car journeys, keep traffic moving, improve air quality and cut carbon emissions."



## Waste strategy and engagement Services

Our current waste and recycling collection contract expires in 2026 and, to make sure we get the right service for the future, last autumn we asked you what your priorities are around waste and recycling.

The survey was the first step in the process of writing a new waste and recycling strategy, which we expect to complete later this year. More than 2,000 of you responded and we are busy looking at your feedback, gathering data and doing analysis to come up with a list of options for your new service. We expect to have the options ready this summer and will be asking what you think of them.

» To find out more, visit the waste strategy page on [engage.wokingham.gov.uk](https://engage.wokingham.gov.uk).

### Executive View

**Cllr Parry Batth, executive member for environment and leisure**

"We had a good response to this early engagement and want to build on that and get more views when we produce options for the waste strategy later in the year. We know how important waste and recycling is to our residents and will work with you to get the strategy right."



# Hundreds give us their views on our Local Plan Update



We'd like to thank the hundreds of residents who had their say on our Local Plan Update consultation for new homes, roads, schools, leisure centres and other vital services, as well as protecting important green spaces, over the next decade and a half.

The nine-week consultation on a Local Plan Update revised growth strategy ended on Monday 24 January. We're now processing your feedback and will revise the document to include as much as we can.

The updated version will go to full council this summer for another six-week consultation in the autumn, then to a planning inspector for independent examination.

To meet local need and an annual Government requirement of 768 new homes to 2038, we proposed a garden village of 4,500 homes at Hall Farm/Loddon Valley, between Shinfield, Arborfield and Sindlesham, plus about 800 more on our existing South Wokingham major development and 2,700 across 46 smaller sites.

This approach lets us plan and build infrastructure at the same time while making developers pay for it.

We also suggested designating almost 80 treasured open areas as Local Green Spaces, offering greater protection from development. We are also looking for between 35 to 50 per cent affordable housing on new developments.

Our consultation was extended from six weeks to nine to ensure everyone knew and could take part over Christmas, bringing it well beyond the legal requirement for councils updating their planning policies, and we took every step we could to publicise it.

We know new development can be an emotive issue and that no site for housing will ever be perfect. However, we must meet the Government's requirements or we could lose our planning powers, leaving us vulnerable to damaging speculative development.

If we plan strategically for this number, residents' children and grandchildren will be able to continue living and working where they grew up – and in well-served communities, not just scattered pockets of new housing.

## Executive View

**Cllr Wayne Smith, executive member for planning and enforcement:**

"We can't give residents everything they want, although we wish we could, but our plan must reflect their and their children's needs.

"As we've always done, we'll share more news once we finish reviewing comments and are ready to take the next steps."



## Mayor's Message



As I approach the end of my year as Mayor of Wokingham Borough, I would like to reflect upon it and recognise and thank residents who have volunteered and worked during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The past year has been difficult for many residents in our borough. We entered 2021 in another nationwide lockdown with tighter restrictions, we saw infection rates rise and we saw many residents experience the loss of loved ones. During this challenging period, you have all played a great part in adapting to these ever-changing, uncertain times.

My particular thanks and appreciation go to all the borough's volunteers. What has been amazing is the huge number of individuals who have offered their help for the very first time which reflects the spirit of our community. Our vibrant voluntary and community sector have gone the extra mile during the pandemic. We must also not forget the keyworkers, such as the NHS, teachers, police and fire service, the care givers, refuse collectors, transportation, utilities, postal and supermarket staff, and all those who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to provide vital services and support to our residents. We are very fortunate to have you.

Now as the easing of restrictions have been lifted and we start to rebuild confidence and stability in our borough, you should all be immensely proud of the journey to get to this point.

It has been a great honour and privilege to represent Wokingham Borough over the past year.

**Cllr Keith Baker MBE**  
Wokingham Borough Mayor

## Election information

Local government and parish council elections are taking place on Thursday, 5 May.

Borough council elections are scheduled in: Arborfield, Bulmershe and Whitegates, Coronation, Emmbrook, Evendons, Finchampstead North, Finchampstead South, Hawkedon, Hillside, Loddon, Maiden Erlegh, Norreys, Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe, Shinfield South, South Lake, Swallowfield, Winnersh and Wokingham Without

There will also be parish council elections for Arborfield & Newland, Swallowfield, Remenham and Wargrave.

We would ask all residents attending polling stations to follow the latest Government guidance on coronavirus.

### Vote by post

Postal voting is the easiest way to vote if you are away, or unable to get to your polling station on Election Day. If you wish to vote by post, we would encourage you to apply now.

### Are you registered to vote?

If you have recently moved home, make sure you are registered at your new address. Visit [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote) and enter your national insurance number, date of birth and previous address.

### Dates for your diary

- Deadline to register to vote – 12 midnight, 14 April
- Deadline for new postal vote applications and for changes to existing postal or proxy votes – 5pm, 19 April
- Deadline for new applications to vote by proxy – 5pm, 26 April

### More information



For full details on how to vote by post visit [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) (search 'elections and voting') or call **(0118) 974 6000**. To register visit [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)

# HAVE YOU CONSIDERED A CAREER IN ADULT SOCIAL CARE?

Our 'Social Care That Can' campaign aims to ensure we continue to provide care that is safe, appropriate, timely and quality throughout the borough.

Working in social care is a rewarding career and one that makes a real difference to the lives of our residents. It is our aspiration to attract, retain and develop the best workforce we possibly can.

Roles include social workers, occupational therapists, care and support positions with our council-owned provider Optalis, our local care providers and voluntary sector.

There are a wide range of benefits to working for us and you will be provided with training and support throughout your career.

We encourage and recognise innovation, place great importance on staff wellbeing and offer flexible working hours with excellent pension benefits.

We also have apprenticeship opportunities if you want to launch your career in social care.

If you are interested in finding out more, visit [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) and search 'jobs in social care'

*"Seventeen years later, I still feel privileged to be a social worker. If you want to be a social worker, I really do believe Wokingham Borough Council is the place you want to be. As soon as I came here, you could sense how lovely the people were. I've never seen it in another local authority where they are so willing to develop the workforce."*

**KAM PADDA**  
Team Manager  
Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Team (DoLS) Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS)



## Become a carer this year

Are you a caring person who likes to help people? Do you like every day to be different? Then care work could be the perfect career choice for you

Nationally, there is a demand for care givers as the number of residents needing care and support grows.

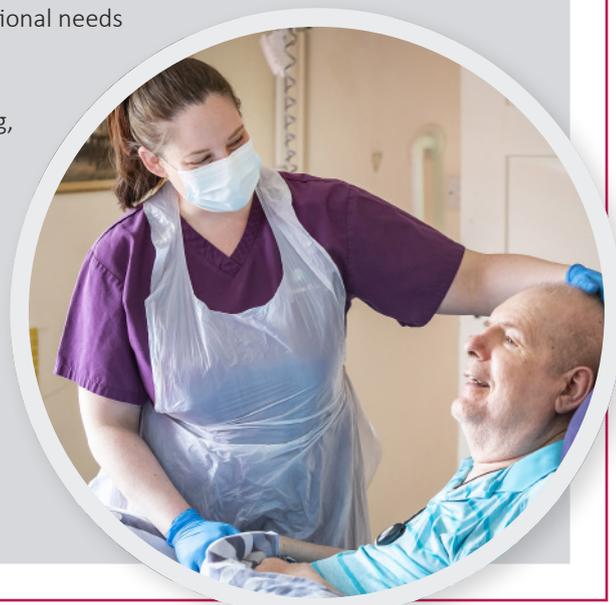
We are working with local care providers to promote vacancies available to support Wokingham Borough residents in need. You can help people with additional needs in your community to live independently, confidently and happily.

Every day is different as a carer, you could be helping residents in need with day-to-day tasks such as eating and drinking, housework, shopping, activities, taking people to appointments, administering medication or even being a friend to talk to.

There are many vacancies available within home care, care homes and supported living services that can make a real difference to our residents. Care work is diverse and there are roles to suit everyone, you can have some experience or no experience as full training is provided.

Benefits of care work include flexible working, good career progression, job satisfaction and security.

Apply for roles today by visiting: [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) and search for 'Every Day is Different'.



# Steps to improve local bus services

We've published an ambitious vision to improve local bus services and help them recover from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Our Bus Service Improvement Plan outlines several targets to be met by 2026, subject to Government funding and local operators' agreement.

It aims to boost passenger numbers to 3 million following a decline from 2.8 million before the pandemic to 1.8 million, or roughly 65 per cent of pre-2020 levels.

The Department for Transport has set aside £3 billion to support local bus services nationally and if we get a share, our plan aims to cut journey times between key destinations in the borough.

Other goals include more frequent and reliable bus services, better access in rural areas, improved passenger satisfaction, better young people's fares, better marketing and improving fleets themselves.

Operators would be supported to "green" their vehicles through upgrades or replacements using cleaner, more modern technology- including electric vehicles. This would both improve air quality and cut carbon emissions in line with our ambitions.



The plan will also introduce a passengers' charter and user group and will be reviewed annually. Our next goal is to agree more detailed steps through an enhanced partnership with operators by April.

## Armed forces covenant

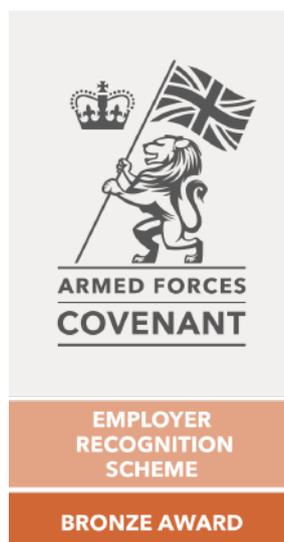
We are proud to have received a bronze award from the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

This re-affirms our commitment to the armed forces community that live and work in the borough.

We first signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2013 and reaffirmed our commitment to it in 2021. It is a promise that those who served, and their families, will be treated fairly.

We are committed to being an armed forces-friendly employer and raise public awareness of the sacrifices made by the service community.

For information on support available to the armed forces community visit our website [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) and search for 'armed forces support'.



## Lower my drinking

Residents who want help to track and reduce their drinking can access free support.

The 'Lower My Drinking' app has been launched by Cranstoun, our substance misuse service after figures from Public Health England showed that the number of people drinking at higher risk during lockdown soared. Users can learn more about the health benefits of cutting down and set themselves goals through tailored support.

Those who need professional help are signposted to local alcohol support services.

It can be downloaded from Google Play and the Apple App Store.

Further help is available through Cranstoun Wokingham on **(0118) 977 2022**.

CAMHS

**SEND Voices**  
W o k i n g h a m

SEN

# GET YOUR VOICE HEARD

The independent voice of families, representing their experiences to improve lives

## What do we do?

We give a voice to families, who like ours, have a child or young person aged 0-25 years who has any Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND). We work in partnership with education, health, social care and other service providers to make sure the services they commission, plan and deliver meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in the Wokingham Borough. We represent their experiences, views and priorities.

Social Care

Short Breaks

## How do we do this?

By listening to our members and as many voices as we can, from across the Wokingham Borough, from a wide range of communities including all ages from birth to 25 and inclusive of the all special educational needs and disabilities. We do this through:

Events



Training courses



Consultations and surveys



Information sharing

School Transport

Disability

## Join us, become a member

**Membership is FREE.** To become a member of SEND Voices Wokingham email your contact details to [info@sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk](mailto:info@sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk) with your contact details. You can also find details of how to join on our website [www.sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk](http://www.sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk) or you can contact us through Facebook.

