



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

An Extraordinary Meeting of the **COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** will be held in David Hicks 1 - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN **MONDAY 17 OCTOBER 2022 AT 7.00 PM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Parsonage', written in a cursive style.

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 7 October 2022

The role of Overview and Scrutiny is to provide independent “critical friend” challenge and to work with the Council’s Executive and other public service providers for the benefit of the public. The Committee considers submissions from a range of sources and reaches conclusions based on the weight of evidence – not on party political grounds.

Note: Non-Committee Members and members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting or participate in the meeting virtually, in line with the Council’s Constitution. If you wish to participate either in person or virtually via Microsoft Teams please contact Democratic Services. The meeting can also be watched live using the following link: <https://youtu.be/LATot7UpstY>

Please note that other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting. The use of these images or recordings is not under the Council’s control.

Our Vision
<i>A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business</i>
Enriching Lives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion excellent education and enable our children and young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background. • Support our residents to lead happy, healthy lives and provide access to good leisure facilities to enable healthy choices for everyone. • Engage and empower our communities through arts and culture and create a sense of identity for the Borough which people feel part of. • Support growth in our local economy and help to build business.
Providing Safe and Strong Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and safeguard our children, young and vulnerable people. • Offer quality care and support, at the right time, to reduce the need for long term care. • Nurture our communities: enabling them to thrive and families to flourish. • Ensure our Borough and communities remain safe for all.
Enjoying a Clean and Green Borough
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play as full a role as possible to achieve a carbon neutral Borough, sustainable for the future. • Protect our Borough, keep it clean and enhance our green areas for people to enjoy. • Reduce our waste, promote re-use, increase recycling and improve biodiversity. • Connect our parks and open spaces with green cycleways.
Delivering the Right Homes in the Right Places
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer quality, affordable, sustainable homes fit for the future. • Ensure the right infrastructure is in place, early, to support and enable our Borough to grow. • Protect our unique places and preserve our natural environment. • Help with your housing needs and support people, where it is needed most, to live independently in their own homes.
Keeping the Borough Moving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve our roads, footpaths and cycleways. • Tackle traffic congestion and minimise delays and disruptions. • Enable safe and sustainable travel around the Borough with good transport infrastructure. • Promote healthy alternative travel options and support our partners in offering affordable, accessible public transport with good transport links.
Changing the Way We Work for You
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be relentlessly customer focussed. • Work with our partners to provide efficient, effective, joined up services which are focussed around our customers. • Communicate better with customers, owning issues, updating on progress and responding appropriately as well as promoting what is happening in our Borough. • Drive innovative, digital ways of working that will connect our communities, businesses and customers to our services in a way that suits their needs.
Be the Best We Can Be
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be an organisation that values and invests in all our colleagues and is seen as an employer of choice. • Embed a culture that supports ambition, promotes empowerment and develops new ways of working. • Use our governance and scrutiny structures to support a learning and continuous improvement approach to the way we do business. • Be a commercial council that is innovative, whilst being inclusive, in its approach with a clear focus on being financially resilient. • Maximise opportunities to secure funding and investment for the Borough. • Establish a renewed vision for the Borough with clear aspirations.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillors

Peter Dennis (Chairman)	David Cornish (Vice-Chairman)	Laura Blumenthal
Shirley Boyt	Chris Johnson	Norman Jorgensen
Pauline Jorgensen	Gregor Murray	Alistair Neal

Substitutes

Chris Bowring	Anne Chadwick	Gary Cowan
Andy Croy	Michael Firmager	Abdul Loyes
Adrian Mather	Beth Rowland	Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
38.		<p>APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence.</p>	
39.		<p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest.</p>	
40.		<p>PUBLIC QUESTION TIME To answer any public questions on items relating to this agenda.</p> <p>A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions submitted under notice.</p> <p>The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the work of this committee.</p> <p>Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to general issues concerned with the work of the Committee or an item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions</p>	
41.		<p>MEMBER QUESTION TIME To answer any member questions relating to items on this agenda.</p>	
42.	None Specific	<p>COST OF LIVING CRISIS RESPONSE To consider the Borough's initial and planned response to the cost of living crisis, including partnership working with the Hardship Alliance.</p>	5 - 22

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|------------|---------------|---|----------------|
| 43. | None Specific | FRAUD AND UNFAIR TRADING UPDATE
To receive a presentation on Fraud and Unfair Trading practices within the Borough, measures to tackle such offences, and case studies. | 23 - 30 |
| 44. | None Specific | LOCAL PLAN UPDATE - PROGRESS UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS
To consider a progress update on the development of the Local Plan Update. | 31 - 40 |
| 45. | None Specific | WORK PROGRAMME
To consider the Committee's work programme. | 41 - 46 |

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent

A Supplementary Agenda will be issued by the Chief Executive if there are any other items to consider under this heading

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Agenda Item 42.

TITLE	Cost of Living Crisis Response
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Community & Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 th October 22
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	Chief Executive - Susan Parsonage

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

A structured response to the growing Cost of Living Crisis is essential in order to provide vital support to people in the borough who are struggling due to spiralling food, energy, fuel and housing costs which fall significantly behind increases in pay or pensions.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee consider the initial response to support residents and reduce the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis within the Borough and are asked to suggest innovative approaches which can feed into proposals and delivery plans being developed through the Hardship Alliance.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report presents an overview of the council's approach, working through the Hardship Alliance, to address the Cost of Living Crisis within the borough. It sets out the workstreams which have been established to focus work along with key aspects of what is being provided by way of support in each of these areas of focus.

Background

The development of the Tackling Poverty Strategy, in December 2021, we created the Hardship Alliance, engaging key partners in the voluntary and community sector (VCS) who form a link to the wider sector. With announcement of the Cost of Living Crisis Response, the Hardship Alliance were ideally placed to lead this work, ensuring effective collaboration between the Council and the wider VCS.

The Hardship Alliance comprises:

- Wokingham United Charities (chair)
- Wokingham Borough Council
- Citizen's Advice Wokingham
- First Days
- Age UK Berkshire
- Wokingham Foodbank

The Hardship Alliance, in leading this work will forge the relationships and linkages into council services and VCS partners to support delivery. They have recently established the Hardship Alliance Action Group, which represents a broader number of VCS partners also working to address poverty within the borough.

Detailed plans for each of the workstreams are currently being developed through fortnightly meetings established with the Hardship Alliance and Assistant Directors, operating as a Silver response.

Analysis of Issues

With rising inflation, driven largely by increases in food prices and energy costs, more people are going to be struggling. The governments mini-budget has now led to increased interest rates, driving up mortgage costs and private sector rents, whilst capping energy prices at a level which is more than double what many people were paying a year ago. Inflation is over 10% and predicted to remain at that level, causing further pressure on spend whilst wage rises are significantly lower.

Locally, we are seeing significant increases in demand for debt and benefits related support; soaring use of the foodbank and Share schemes; and more people now struggling who prior to these changes had been managing well, without many concerns for their future.

A data dashboard and analysis is being developed, based on local and real time data which will see increases in the numbers of people struggling as seen in council services and VCS partners. This will be updated from weekly data sources.

An initial discussion with the Hardship Alliance led to the creation of 7 workstreams, each led by a member of the Hardship Alliance with Assistant Director(s) from the council. These workstreams are:

- Developing a Needs Led Approach
- Funding
- People Based Resources
- Logistics
- Essential
- Data

- Communications

Through these workstreams detailed actions will be taken forward at pace to deliver support on the immediate needs and respond to emerging challenges as far as possible. This work recognises the growing number of new people who will be needing support, who have never previously been in that position and are therefore less aware of what support is available or how to access it.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	N/A	N/A

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation / Decision

It is intended to run a Crowdfunding campaign in association with Berkshire Community Foundation to raise extra money for VCS partners to deliver the response, with no additional council finances sought at this stage. This will sit alongside other funding identified to help the VCS in their response, aiming to reduce further increases in demand on council services and budgets.

Cross-Council Implications

Adoption of this strategy will provide the basis for further work across the council and services to improve the way people in poverty are worked with and supported. The priorities and focus of this strategy should therefore be reflected in approaches taken by other services.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Addressing rising poverty challenges through the cost of living crisis within the borough in an equitable way will support delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030

Through some of the actions we are looking to provide warm hubs for people struggling to heat their homes, along with energy saving packs which will support from the growing number of residents in fuel poverty.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

N/A

List of Background Papers
None

Contact Mark Gwynne	Service Chief Executive's Office
Telephone No 07710 465612	Email mark.gwynne@wokingham.gov.uk

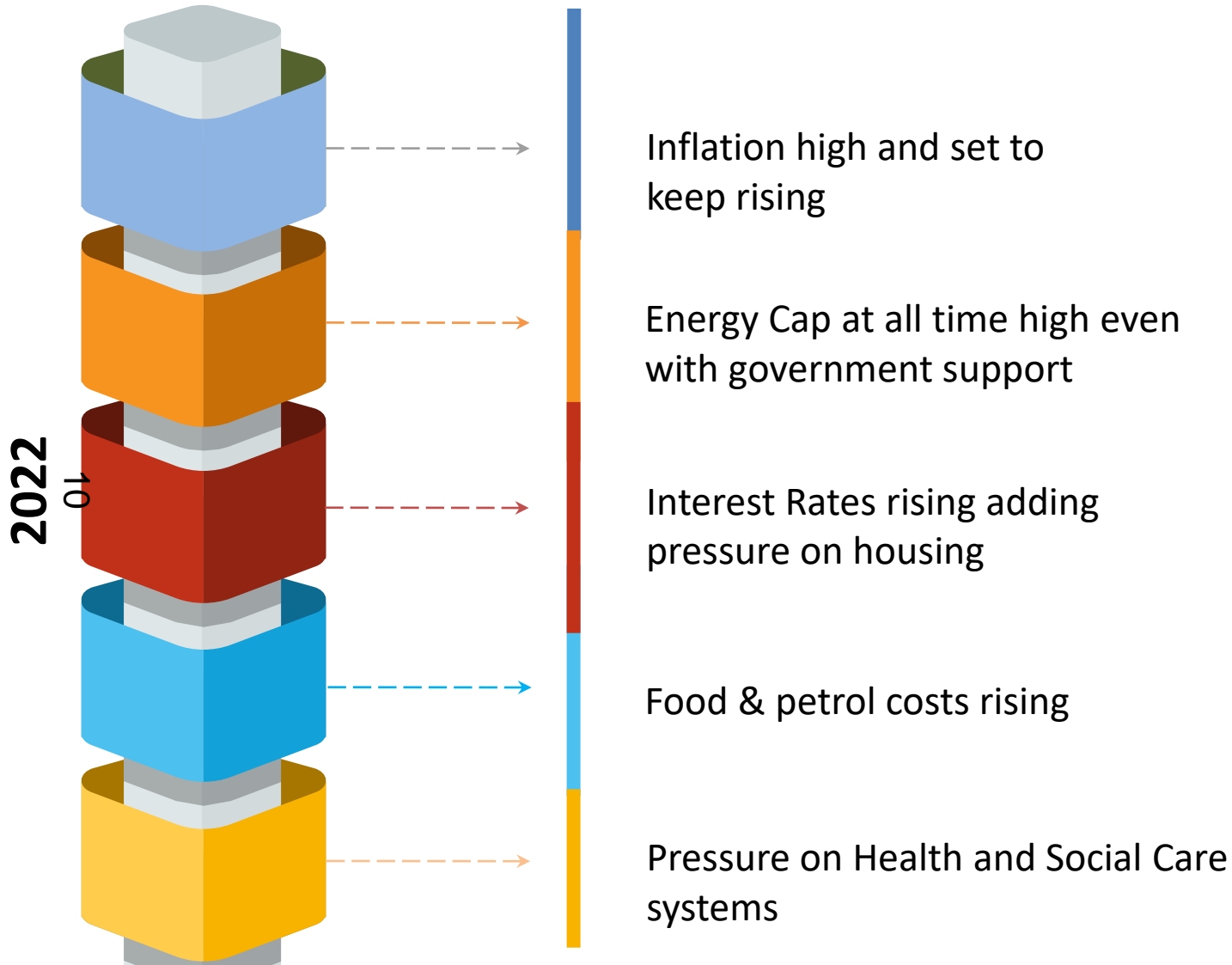
Cost of Living Crisis Response

6

October 2022



Where are we now



Disposable household income due to drop by 2.2% - biggest fall in living standards since the 1950s

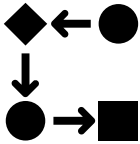


Lack of comprehensive government response to COLC



COVID-19 likely to resurge in Autumn with growing pressures on local hospitals and ambulance services already being felt

How can we respond



Governance

Develop a community led response driven through the Hardship Alliance, supported by the Council, working with many groups and partners



Partnership

Engage stakeholders early to create a shared narrative and plan, agreed direction and collaborative response



Innovation

Recognise the financial constraints locally and seek innovative ways to support the community, raise funds and positively enhance the offer to the borough

Workstreams

Developing Needs Led Approach



Workstream Lead:
Jake (CAB) with Ingrid Slade & Viki Elliot-King

Funding



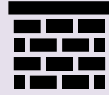
Workstream Lead:
Amy (WUC) with Graham Cadle

People Based Resources



Workstream Lead:
Mark Gwynne with Zulfiqar Mulak

Logistics



Workstream Lead:
Emma (First Days) with Sarah Morgan

Essentials



Workstream Lead:
Anette Medhurst (Foodbank) with Rhian Hayes

Data



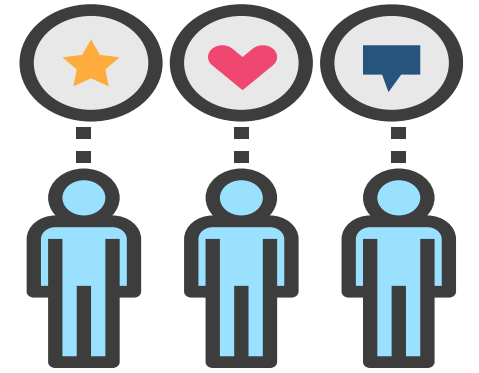
Workstream Lead:
Emily Higson with Will Roper

Comms



Workstream Lead:
Fiona Price (Age UK) with Dave Allen & Sal Thirlway

Developing a Needs Led Approach



UNIVERSAL RESPONSE

To support the needs of all residents across the borough irrespective of their circumstances, linked to:

- Mental health decreasing due to rising poverty
- Extreme food & fuel poverty
- Housing needs and rising costs
- Businesses struggling leading to employment risks

TARGETED RESPONSE

Establishing the cohort of residents who are most at risk, leading to death or significant illness linked to those who are elderly / frail and living alone or those with specific conditions such as cardiovascular / respiratory / dementia

- Extreme food & fuel poverty
- Mental Health
- Housing

Ensuring those at greatest risk of death or serious illness are supported, whilst delivering a wider universal response to the whole community.

Funding the Response

COORDINATED FUNDING

Approach

Working across sectors to centralise the funding available to have the biggest impact for the community. Reducing duplication of effort and ensuring ease of access to grant funding.

Includes:

- Household Support Grant circa £525k for Oct-Mar for food / energy / FSM
- Explore one off funding already ear marked for Hardship within WBC to establish how this can be brought together to deliver a needs based model
- Engaging with Town & Parish Councils, charities and trusts to explore how hardship funding can work differently in the emergency, linked to application, frequency of approvals, etc
- Crowd Funding opportunities inc Business Engagement to support a Community desire to help
- Understanding funding opportunities, developing bids for existing and new grants that can support local efforts



Working together to
have the biggest
community impact
with limited financial
resources

People Based Resources



REFOCUSING OF EXISTING RESOURCE

Potential to redirect, supplement and re-prioritise resources to support the Hardship Response:

- Training library staff in Income Maximisation to support early intervention
- Diverting community based staff to support the Hardship Response / VCS as required
- Redirect Inclusion Comms role to support Hardship Response
- Work with HFU response team to identify ways of collaborating and building capacity
- Working with Wokingham Volunteer Centre to increase volunteers to help in providing support

OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE CAPACITY

- Potential (subject to funding) to create a dedicated team for vulnerable clients working within WBC (e.g. taskforce) to support the targeted cohort with wellbeing needs
- Opportunity to follow sector models to support Asylum hotel residents to become volunteers and support better engagement within their local communities

Using existing resources differently to meet needs where possible and exploring innovative ways to support the response

Logistics to deliver



ACCOMMODATION

Work with VCS & Health partners to establish accommodation needs to support:

- Storage required to hold bulk purchasing
- Explore a shared office location to provide a one stop shop for support, including private meeting space
- Explore the opportunity to open a Health Hub
- Utilise community buildings as Warm Banks / Community Kitchens & maximise engagement with:
 - • Libraries / Community Centres
 - Churches
 - Town & Parishes

Making best use of community buildings schemes and goodwill to solve complex logistic issues

TRANSPORT

- Review how existing vehicles could be used to transport stock to various locations e.g. food
- Explore community interest in delivery needs
- Opportunity to engage with Asylum hotel volunteers with a cycle scheme provision

Essentials to Support

FOOD, ENERGY SAVING & OTHER NEEDS

Working across the VCS to provide essential support by way of food, energy and other needs for struggling families:

- Linking into and building on the existing offer
- Enabling provision in local areas
- Responding to changing needs and emerging opportunities
- Enabling people to live sustainably and within their means

17



Making easiest access to support with food and other essentials to reduce people's outgoings

EXISTING AVENUES OF SUPPORT

Linking with and building on existing support through other opportunities such as the Household Support Fund, Local Welfare Provision, Essential Items Grants and other opportunities.

Data

UNDERSTANDING CHANGING DEMAND

Establishing a data scorecard with more real time information

- Drawing data from the Hardship Alliance and wider VCS partners on demand
- Developing fortnightly reporting

Understanding emerging Census and CACI household income data to look at demographics - enabling the targeting of support and communications at people likely to be in need.

18

MONITORING TAKEUP & IMPACT

- Monitoring take-up of support
- Opportunity to engage with Asylum hotel volunteers with a cycle scheme provision



Understanding data in real time to inform approaches and enable a rapid response

Communications

SUPPORTING WORKSTREAMS

Working with workstream leads and VCS partners to get the message out to people in need of support:

- Providing practical help
- Supporting direct advice
- Signposting to support available

6

This will enable de-stigmatising the need to ask for help, through using real examples and story telling to get increased engagement



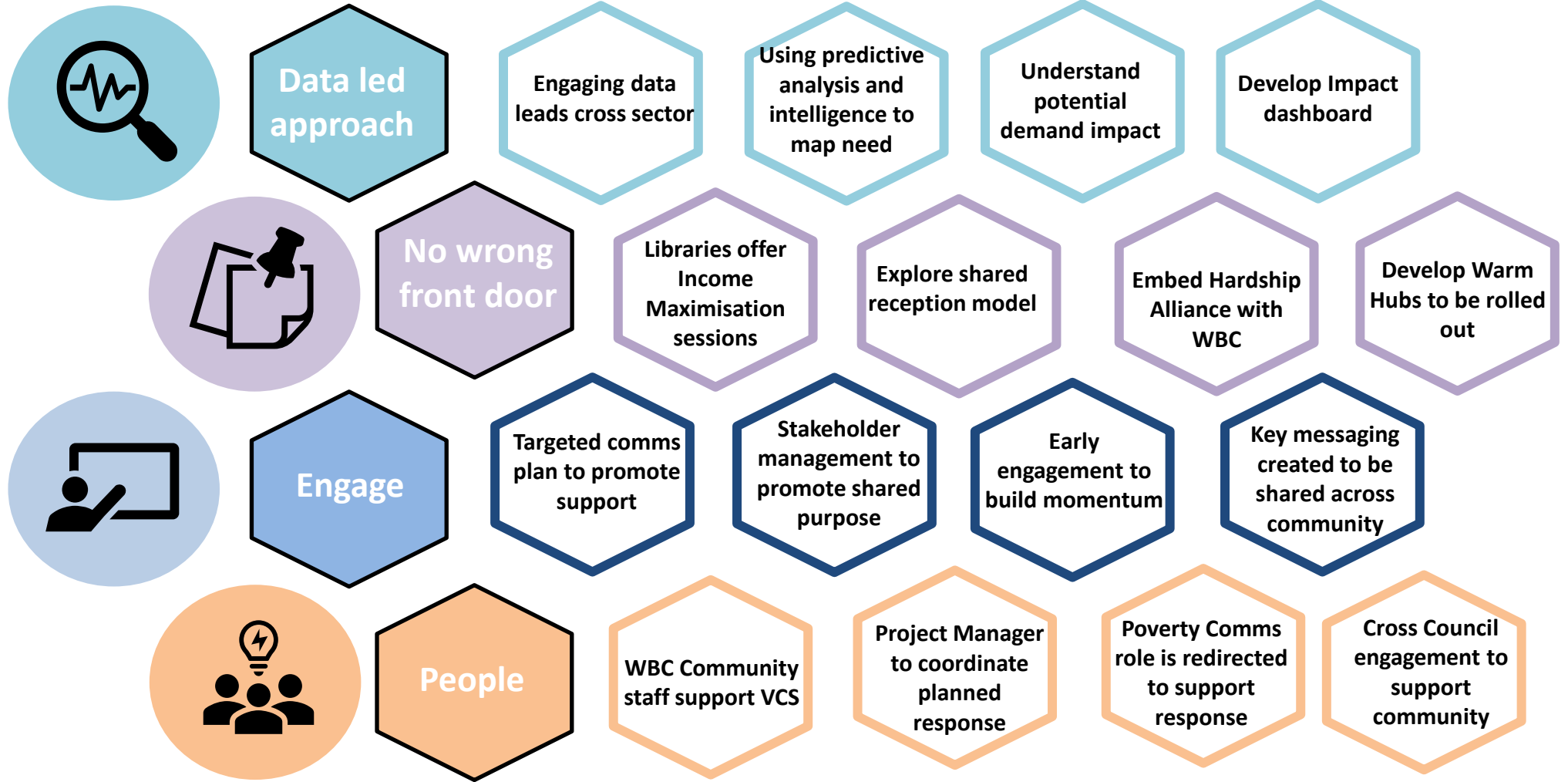
Raising awareness of support available for residents, particularly people who have not previously needed support so may be unaware of what is available

JOINT MESSAGING

Supporting messaging from WBC and Hardship Alliance – working together to amplify reach.

Increasing recruitment of volunteers and donations to support the response.

Some Early² Opportunities



Innovations and Opportunities

CONSIDERING IDEAS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO INNOVATE

Thoughts from members to inform planning the response and widening reach to people in need of support:

- Supporting working with our VCS partners
- Working with town and parish councils
- Working with local communities



What good things have you heard to further develop our shared approach?

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Wokingham Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny Fraud and Unfair Trading

Sean Murphy - Public Protection Manager - Public Protection Partnership
Shared Trading Standards Service

Offences Enforced by Trading Standards

- ▶ Fraud by False Representation
- ▶ Theft
- ▶ Fraudulent Trading
- ▶ Intellectual Property Crime i.e. trade marks and counterfeiting
- ▶ Money Laundering
- ▶ Customs and Excises Offences e.g. Tobacco Duty Marks
- ▶ Unfair Trading

Acquisitive Crime

- ▶ Doorstep crime
- ▶ Vehicle sale related crime
- ▶ Counterfeiting and distributing counterfeit goods
- ▶ Advance fee fraud
- ▶ Business to business fraud
- ▶ Smuggled goods e.g. tobacco and cigarettes
- ▶ Money laundering of criminal assets
- ▶ Scams
- ▶ On-line fraud
- ▶ Illegal Money Lending

Manifestations of Scams

- ▶ On-line phishing
- ▶ Direct mailing fraud (lotteries, mystics etc)
- ▶ Romance fraud
- ▶ 42 victims supported 2021/22
- ▶ 27 since call-blockers fitted
- ▶ 6 door-cams fitted

Tackling Crime

27

- ▶ Doorstep Crime Patrols
- ▶ Rapid Action Team
- ▶ No Cold Calling Zones
- ▶ On-line investigations
- ▶ Public awareness
- ▶ Intelligence gathering
- ▶ Joint operating model with TVP
- ▶ Financial investigations
- ▶ Confiscation



Crime Case Study 1 - 2022/23

Trader receives sentence of 15 months imprisonment suspended for 18 months, and is ordered to pay compensation of £7,200 to homeowners. The trader entered guilty pleas at Reading Crown Court to five counts contrary to the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008. Specifically the prosecution case alleged that gardening work which had been paid for by a number of consumers was not completed, and the actual work undertaken was not to a professional standard. This case was the second prosecution of the same trader in relation to the same type of offending. The trader was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment to be suspended for 12 months, he was ordered to take part in the Thinking Skills Programme and to pay compensation in the sum of £7200.

Crime Case Study 3 - 2022/23

29

Owner of a property management company convicted. This prosecution concerned the business activities of a property management and letting company. The offending related to issues such as rental monies not being paid, maintenance not being done, failures to communicate, dishonesty in communication, and on some occasions making threats to customers. The individual entered guilty pleas to 7 offences contrary to the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008. The Court sentenced the offender by way of a Compensation Order of £10,856 and a Community Order for 12 months with 15 days RAR (rehabilitation activity requirement).

Crime Case Study 3 - 2022/23

Manager of a locksmith company convicted after being found guilty of 3 consumer protection offences following a trial at Reading Magistrates Court. The defendant was charged as a manager of the business and convicted of 2 offences of aggressive practice and 1 offence of misleading action under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008. The defendant was fined £4,500 and ordered to pay £510.61 in compensation, £190 in surcharges and £4,000 towards prosecution costs.

TITLE	Local Plan Update – Progress Update and Next Steps
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 October 2022
WARD	None specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Steve Moore

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To inform Members of the progress made with the Local Plan Update.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee review the report and note the progress made to date, the work ongoing and next steps, and offer comment.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

National planning policy requires local authorities to regularly review, and where necessary, update their local plans – the strategy which sets out policies to manage development and is the starting point for determining planning applications.

The council's existing local plans – the Core Strategy plan (2010) and the Managing Development Delivery plan (2014) were intended to manage development in the period to 2026. To ensure the policies remain effective, the council is progressing a new local plan – the Local Plan Update (LPU), which will provide a framework to manage development further into the future.

Whilst optimising the capacity of urban areas makes a valuable contribution, the identification of suitable greenfield sites is required to fully meet needs. Early consultations on the local plan and technical evidence supports the use of strategic scale greenfield development to meet the majority of the remaining need.

The council has consulted on two draft local plans, with summaries of the main issues raised being available on the council's website.

A cross party Member Working Group has been established to consider the opinions expressed through consultation alongside technical evidence, and provide advice to the Executive Member responsible for strategic planning and officers. In recognition of the ongoing discussions on the direction of the LPU, and the time required for this and any retesting of the evidence base, the programme for the LPU has necessarily slowed.

The programme for submitting a new local plan will be highly influenced by whether the recommendation is to broadly continue with the strategy outlined in the last consultation, or to consult on an alternative.

Key issues for the local plan are how to plan for the scale of housing need expected by the government and the limited available opportunities beyond strategic scale greenfield development.

Until a new local plan is adopted, the technical absence of a sufficient housing land supply will mean decisions on planning applications and appeals will be made under the 'tilted balance'. This is likely to result in some developments being allowed contrary to the judgement of the council.

Background

National planning policy requires local authorities to regularly review, and where necessary, update their local plans – the strategy sets out policies to manage development and is the starting point for determining planning applications.

The council's existing local plans – the Core Strategy plan (2010) and the Managing Development Delivery (MDD) plan (2014) were intended to manage development in the period to 2026. To ensure the policies remain effective, the council is progressing a new local plan – the Local Plan Update (LPU), which will provide a framework to manage development further into the future.

National planning policy states that local plans should be prepared with the objective of contributing to sustainable development, be prepared positively and shaped by engagement between plan-makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees.

Policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for housing, employment and other uses, supported by infrastructure. They should look over a minimum 15-year period from the date of adoption. Where larger scale developments form part of the strategy, these should be set within a longer-term vision of at least 30 years.

Approaches for locating development

Setting aside geographical options, there are four broad approaches for locating most development needs, such as housing:

1. Intensification of urban areas to meet all needs;
2. Optimisation of urban areas, with remaining need met through a large number of smaller greenfield sites;
3. Optimisation of urban areas, with the remaining need met through a small number of larger greenfield sites; and
4. Hybrid approach of options 2 and 3.

With few sites within urban areas being promoted by landowners, particularly those of scale, and no historical precedent, the intensification of urban areas to meet all needs is not achievable. Additionally, significantly intensified development density would harm the urban environment by virtue of necessitating building at significant height and the use of lower carparking standards, building on green spaces both public and private gardens, and building housing on land in active commercial use.

Early consultations on the local plan asked open questions regarding possible approaches. The most supported answer was to use a combination of approaches, i.e. both larger and smaller sites. The most supported single approach was however meeting need through a small number of large developments that provided for their own infrastructure needs and based on garden city principles.

As stated above, technical evidence shows that it is not possible to plan for needs based on the intensification of urban areas alone. Additionally, technical evidence also shows that need cannot be wholly met by utilising just smaller sites with there being limited potentially suitable options. Large scale developments are often also the best technical solution for providing new housing in ways which respond to the challenge of

climate change. They offer the opportunity to design in sustainability from the outset, including measures to lessen the need to travel by private car, so reducing our carbon footprint and impact on the environment and air quality compared to dispersed development. Large developments also allow the planning of accessible green spaces, drainage management, biodiversity enhancements and renewable energy.

Strategies proposed in plan consultations have had regard to the expressed preference towards larger strategic scale development with supporting infrastructure.

Draft local plan consultations

The council has consulted on two draft strategies for the new local plan – the Draft Local Plan in 2020 and the Revised Growth Strategy in 2021.

Each strategy included the common themes of:

- Optimisation of urban areas;
- Allocating suitable land on the edge of main settlements;
- Allocating suitable land within and on the edge of existing strategic development locations;
- Allocating a new strategic development location; and
- Allocating proportional development across smaller settlements.

The principal difference between the two consultation plans is the location of the proposed new strategic development location.

The Draft Local Plan (2020) proposed the creation of a new garden town at Grazeley. This resulted from joint work between the council, West Berkshire Council and Reading Borough Council, supported by capacity funding from the government through Homes England. A subsequent and unexpected extension of emergency planning arrangements around AWE Burghfield resulted in this strategy being unachievable.

The Revised Growth Strategy (2021) proposed the creation of a new garden settlement on land south of the M4 between Shinfield, Arborfield and Sindlesham, known as Hall Farm / Loddon Valley.

High-level summary of the outcomes of both consultations have been prepared and are available on the council's website.

Next steps

Cllr Lindsay Ferris, the Executive Member for strategic planning has re-established a cross party Member Working Group to provide a sounding board for him and officers in the preparation of planning policy.

The Group are currently in the process of familiarising themselves with the larger scale promotions across the borough. This will involve visiting each area and receiving a presentation from the promoters as to their vision. Work will then continue to review the consultation strategy and test any reasonable alternatives.

In recognition of the ongoing discussions on the direction of the LPU, and the time required for this and any retesting of the evidence base, the programme for the LPU has necessarily slowed. Currently, submission of the LPU to examination might now be

anticipated in the first half of 2023/24 if the plan were to proceed directly to publication under Regulation 19 (pre-submission consultation), but would be delayed to late 2024/25 or early 2025/26 if a further consultation under Regulation 18 is required before progressing to Regulation 19.

Any substantial change from the strategy set out in the Revised Growth Strategy would lead to a recommendation to undertake further consultation under Regulation 18.

Based on the experience of other local planning authorities, examination through to adoption would reasonably take 18 months to complete.

Analysis of Issues

Housing need and the plan period

National planning policy requires councils to use a standard method to calculate the number of homes that are needed and therefore expected to be planned for, unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach.

Based on case law around exceptional circumstances generally, demonstrating this requires the presentation of a set of factors that come together to justify diverting from the normal application of national policy and guidance. These factors must be locally specific through either being uncommon across local authorities or uncommon in terms of the scale of consequences.

The council has previously engaged a leading planning barrister and statistician to discuss exceptional circumstances, the outcome being that there are no sufficiently robust grounds. Issues regarding projections, house prices and earnings are not uncommon or of sufficient scale.

National planning guidance states that the affordability adjustment within the standard method is applied to take account of past under-delivery. The context of past over delivery is not addressed, however, the inference is that the affordability adjustment would also account for this.

At 1 April 2022, the standard method currently calculates the housing need for Wokingham Borough to be 781 dwellings per year. Figures from previous calculations are below.

Table 1: Local Housing Need 2018/19 to 2022/23

Year	Local Housing Need
2018/19	864
2019/20	804
2020/21	789
2021/22	768
2022/23	781

With the national planning policy expectation for strategic policies to look ahead over a minimum 15-year period from adoption, and based on the outcome of the standard method at this time, the scale of housing need that would need to be enabled by the LPU

would be 12,496 homes (16¹ x 781) from the year of submission. Homes delivered before the year of submission would not act to reduce this need.

An uncertainty in preparing the LPU is the delivery of sites with existing, or a resolution to grant, planning permission. The quicker existing schemes are completed, the greater the challenge to find additional land going forward.

Members of the government have indicated an intention to amend national planning policy, including how housing need is approach. No details are available, nor is there any published timeframe for consultation or the introduction of any changes.

Availability of suitable smaller sites

As stated above, technical assessments of promoted land currently indicate limited opportunities for achieving development on suitable smaller sites.

This limits how the council might reasonably respond should sites currently assessed as suitable be reassessed as unsuitable, should sites be withdrawn for consideration by the landowner, or should housing need be increased. In such circumstances, it is likely that two strategic scale developments would be required, rather than one as proposed in recent consultation plans.

Standards for environment performance

Environmental standards for new development can be set in planning policy. The preparation of the LPU provides an opportunity to introduce higher performance measures, e.g. those relating to energy and water consumption, carbon performance, on-site renewable energy generation and biodiversity net gain. Any higher standards would need to be supported by appropriate evidence which convinces the examining Planning Inspector that they were viable to impose.

Until new policy is adopted, the council can only require environmental standards to meet those set out in the existing local plans. These are no longer reflective of best practice.

Housing land supply and development proposals

National planning policy requires local planning authorities to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against the housing requirement set out in adopted local plan, or against their local housing need where the plan is more than five years old. The supply of specific deliverable sites should in addition include a buffer, the minimum being 5%.

Where a local planning authority is unable to demonstrate deliverable sites in excess of five years, the policies most important for determining planning applications and appeals may be deemed out-of-date. In such a circumstance national planning policy advises that planning permission should be granted unless it involves land that is specifically projected under national planning policy or the adverse impacts of granting

¹ 16 years reflects the year of submission, plus 15 years post adoption.

permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. This is referred to as the presumption in favour of sustainable development or the ‘tilted balance’.

The significant over delivery of housing in recent years has inevitably reduced the bank of planning permissions that remain and therefore the short term deliverable housing land supply ahead of a new local plan being adopted.

Inspectors considering three recent appeals concluded the deliverable supply was marginally less than five years:

- Willow Tree House, Brookers Hill, Shinfield (APP/X0360/W/21/3275086): 4.84 years which equates to a shortfall 128 dwellings.
- Land at Baird Road, Arborfield Garrison (APP/X0360/W/21/3276169): between 4.35-4.74 years supply which equates to a shortfall of 213-527 dwellings.
- Land at junction of Sawpit Road and School Road, Hurst (APP/X0360/W/21/3280255): 4.92 years supply which equates to a shortfall of 64 dwellings.

Whilst the council disputes elements of the conclusions reached by the Inspectors, in light of their findings and emerging monitoring information, the council has accepted that the deliverable housing land supply is less than five years and that the tilted balance is engaged.

Whilst the tilted balance is engaged, it is the council’s opinion that the shortfall in deliverable supply must be viewed within the bigger picture of housing delivery which has significantly exceeded all assessments of housing need.

If over delivery was taken into account across the Core Strategy local plan period or since the introduction of the standard method for calculating Local Housing Need, there would be no shortfall.

Given this context, it is the council opinion that the weight to be attached to the benefits of additional housing within the tilted balance should be tempered. This was reflected in the approach set out in both the Willow Tree House and Land at Baird Road appeals, where the Inspector applied only moderate weight to the provision of additional housing in the tilted balance. Both appeals were dismissed.

Notwithstanding, the absence of sufficient deliverable housing land supply is likely to result in some developments being allowed contrary to the judgement of the council.

Table 2: Comparison between housing completions and the Core Strategy housing requirement

	Completions (annual)	Completions (cumulative from 2006/7)	Core Strategy CP17 requirement (annual)	Core Strategy CP17 requirement (cumulative)
2006/7	1,011	1,011	600	600
2007/8	482	1,493	600	1,200
2008/9	369	1,862	600	1,800
2009/10	226	2,088	600	2,400
2010/11	217	2,305	600	3,000
2011/12	267	2,572	700	3,700
2012/13	390	2,962	700	4,400

2013/14	488	3,450	700	5,100
2014/15	454	3,904	700	5,800
2015/16	675	4,579	700	6,500
2016/17	967	5,546	723	7,223
2017/18	1,528	7,074	723	7,946
2018/19	1,284	8,358	723	8,669
2019/20	1,555	9,913	723	9,392
2020/21	1,167	11,080	723	10,115
TOTAL	11,080		10,115	

Green = Cumulative completions have been greater than the cumulative requirement.

Table 3: Comparison between housing completions and Local Housing Need

	Completions (annual)	Completions (cumulative)	Standard Method need (annual) ²	Standard Method need (cumulative)
2018/19	1,284	1,284	864	864
2019/20	1,555	2,839	804	1,668
2020/21	1,167	4,006	789	2,457
TOTAL	4,006		2,457	

Green = Completions / cumulative completions greater than Local Housing Need/ cumulative Local Housing Need.

Government direction and potential for intervention

In March 2020, the government set a deadline of December 2023 for all councils to have up-to-date local plans in place. According to the Levelling Up White Paper, only 39% of local authorities have adopted a plan within the preceding five years.

Whilst preparing a new local plan may be unpopular with affected communities, officers believe that the benefits of preparing a new plan to maintain the effective management of development and infrastructure are substantial.

If the council chose not to pursue a new local plan itself, this would not necessarily mean one wasn't produced, with the government having legislative powers to intervene and prepare a new plan directly.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION (See other financial implications section below)

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Circa £300k	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Circa £250k	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Circa £200k	Yes	Revenue

² Local Housing Need calculated on 1 April each year.

<p>Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision</p> <p>The table above sets out the projected costs associated with preparing and adopting the LPU.</p> <p>This is a multi-year project and therefore the costs will be spread across a number of financial years, the exact timing of which will be subject to internal decisions regarding the preferred spatial strategy as well as external influences such as the examination.</p> <p>The profile of the budget will vary according to other external other factors, however unless exceptional costs arise, is expected to be covered by available budgets.</p> <p>Not progressing the LPU Update will result in increased costs through the planning application and appeal process.</p>

<p>Cross-Council Implications</p> <p>The LPU will contain planning policies which manage the development of land. This may impact on capital projects proposed by service areas. In addition, the spatial strategy proposed will influence the geographical distribution of future service needs, particularly those linked to housing.</p>
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<p>Public Sector Equality Duty</p> <p>Equalities Impact Assessments have been undertaken for all consultative stages of the LPU. An assessment has not been undertaken for the purpose of this specific report given its nature of being an update and not considering policy direction.</p>

<p>Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i></p> <p>The Draft Local Plan (2020) included policies intended to ensure the majority of development was directed to locations where people would have the opportunity to walk and cycle, reducing the need to travel by private car unnecessarily. The plan also included a range of policies which sought to improve the environmental performance of buildings, including the achievement of carbon neutrality. These principle are retained within the recommended revised growth strategy.</p>

<p>Reasons for considering the report in Part 2</p> <p>Not applicable.</p>

<p>List of Background Papers</p> <p>National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance Draft Plan Consultation 2020 Revised Growth Strategy Consultation 2021</p>
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COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	CONTACT OFFICER
EXTRAORDINARY 26 Oct 2022	MTFP	To receive a strategic overview of the draft MTFP	Work programme	Graham Ebers
	Work Programme	To consider the work programme for the Committee for 2022-23	Standing Item	Democratic Services

DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	CONTACT OFFICER
3 Nov 2022	MTFP	To receive proposed capital and revenue bids within the MTFP	Work programme	Graham Ebers
	Domestic Abuse Update	To receive an update on the anti-abuse charter, KPIs relating to the Domestic Abuse service and to receive an updated breakdown of instances of domestic abuse from within the Borough.	Committee request	Narinder Brar
	Violence Against Women and Girls	To receive an update on the strategy to end Violence Against Women and Girls in the Borough.	Committee request	Narinder Brar
	Work Programme	To consider the work programme for the Committee for 2022-23	Standing Item	Democratic Services

DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	CONTACT OFFICER
EXTRAORDINARY 29 Nov 2022	MTFP	To receive a strategic overview of the draft MTFP	Work programme	Graham Ebers
	Bus Service Update	To receive an update on bus services within the Borough	Committee Request	Rebecca Brooks
	LCWIP Update	To receive an update on the development of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.	Committee Request	Chris Easton
	Work Programme	To consider the work programme for the Committee for 2022-23	Standing Item	Democratic Services

DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	CONTACT OFFICER
19 Dec 2022	MTFP	To receive a strategic overview of the draft MTFP	Work programme	Graham Ebers
	Arts & Culture Strategy Update	To receive an update on the Arts & Culture Strategy, including how every effort is being made to include as many groups and communities as possible	Work programme	Rhian Hayes
	Work Programme	To consider the work programme for the Committee for 2022-23	Standing Item	Democratic Services

44

Task & Finish Group - To investigate the differences between Council managed social housing provision and preferred housing association managed homes. Members are concerned that there is a two-tier system, with good services offered by WBC managed homes compared to that offered by housing associations.

Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.	Scrutinising the development of the Council's Budget for 2023/24
2.	Reviewing the work of the Community Safety Partnership, the effectiveness of local policing and fire and rescue services
3.	Exercising the Council's flood risk management responsibilities by monitoring flood risk activities and partnership working with Towns and Parishes
4.	Reviewing the Assets Review Programme
5.	Scrutinising the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Strategy
6.	Scrutinising burial capacity across the Borough and the Council's plans to ensure adequate future capacity
7.	Scrutinising the Council's Localities service and measures to develop closer working relationships with Town and Parish Councils and the voluntary sector
8.	Scrutinising service and policy developments relating to the Council's public facing services and its in-house support services
9.	Reviewing highways and transport issues including highways contracts, customer service, car parking, Bus Strategy and cycling infrastructure
10.	Scrutinising the Council's Arts and Culture Strategy
11.	Scrutinising the implementation of the in-house enforcement and safety service
12.	Scrutinising the Council's Housing Services to ensure that the needs of local residents and communities are being met
13.	Scrutinising the operation and performance of the Council-owned companies and shared service arrangements
14.	Scrutinising the footpath network, including plans to make them more accessible
15.	Appointing Task and Finish Groups as appropriate

Other Items for consideration

Borough Wide Parking Management Strategy

Further Meeting Dates & Provisional Items

9 Jan 2023: MTFP

6 Mar 2023: Police & Fire Services update, Flood Risk Management Update, Anti-Abuse Charter Update

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