



ANNUAL REVIEW OF CORPORATE PLAN

For the second year running, Wokingham Borough Council has faced the challenge of Covid-19 throughout 2021/22.

The year began with the emergence of the Delta Variant, with about 30 cases identified in the borough by the end of May 2021 and is ending with a high rate of Omicron cases, in particular in schools.

Despite these ongoing challenges, the council has continued to deliver high quality services and projects for the community, some of which are set out in this appendix that provides a short overview of some of the council's achievements so far in 2021/22.

A full Annual Review of the Corporate Plan 2021/22, including KPIs, will be produced later this year.





COVID FOR ANNUAL REVIEW OF CORPORATE PLAN



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MOBILE RAPID TESTING UNITS:

In March 2021, the borough council was one of the first to roll out Mobile Testing Units in March 2021, using data to identify and target places with local take-up rates. We also continued to run lateral flow testing sites for key workers, 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.

SURGE TESTING:

In June 2021, we ran a surge testing programme, following the rapid spread of the Delta variant in the borough. This led to more than 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.

VACCINE ROLL-OUT

Although the vaccine programme is the responsibility of health partners, the borough council has supported this effort. 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.

SURGE VACCINATION

In June 2021, we worked NHS partners to run the surge vaccine programme over a two-week period at Bulmershe Leisure Centre. Many WBC staff took part in this effort and a staggering 4,000 people were vaccinated at the centre as a result.

CONTINUING TO HELP COMMUNITY AND BUSINESSES

The council's Covid Support Officers have continued to promote 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. The council has 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.

KEEPING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS SAFE

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

The Children's Covid-19 Taskforce have provided continual 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.





CHARITY AND COMMUNITY HUB:

The Wokingham Charity and Community Hub is the new home for 10 charities and organisations. The Hub, which opened in January and is based in Wokingham is open for drop-ins for the public to seek advice. 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 (moving in over the next few weeks)
- Citizen's Advice Wokingham are already located at Waterford House on the second floor and are also part of the hub

DOMESTIC ABUSE:

The council's new Domestic Abuse Strategy (2021-2024) was approved in December 2021. The strategy will deliver on the council's response to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and sets out the council and local partner organisations approaches to providing support for domestic abuse victims and their children, holding perpetrators to account and working towards long-term wellbeing.

HARDSHIP ALLIANCE AND DRAFT ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY:

The council has combined with four local charities (First Days, Citizens Advice Wokingham, AgeUK Berkshire and Wokingham United Charities) to form the Hardship Alliance with core objectives of prevention, supporting people in poverty, strengthening communities in their resilience to poverty and improving life opportunities for people living in poverty. The alliance has produced a draft Anti-Poverty Strategy and taken it out to public consultation to seek wider views before it is finalised.

INVESTMENT IN PREVENTION SERVICES:

The council has agreed to boost its adult social care prevention programme working with the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) by an additional £280,000 to £2.1million for the in 2022/23 (compared with £1.8million in 2021/22). The council's Adult Social Care Strategy and its Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy outline the importance of prevention services in supporting its residents to improve their health and wellbeing and aiming to prevent, reduce and delay the need for formal care and support.

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SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS:

Wokingham Borough ranked number one in the southeast and number two in the country on the Adult Social Cares Outcomes Framework under measure '1E: the proportion of adults with learning disability in paid employment' for 2020-21.





ESTABLISHED WOKINGHAM BOROUGH YOUTH COUNCIL:

launched in July 2021, the Youth Council is made up of students from across the borough, with each secondary school invited to put forward two representatives. The members have debated and feedback to the council on issues such as climate emergency and diversity and have also come forward to act as champions for issues of particular concern to them.

DINTON ACTIVITY CENTRE:

The £2.4 million activity centre opened in Sept 2021 to provide an accessible base for all to enjoy the park. It was the borough's first net zero carbon building, featuring eco-friendly materials and functions, supporting the Council's commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030.

CARNIVAL HUB:

Building work reached the milestone of topping out (the point at which the building work reaches the highest point) this year and the art and leisure centre is on track to open this summer. The new facility includes swimming pools, a spa, fitness studios, a café, a dual-purpose hall for sports and 400 seat cultural performances and a new large library

BRIDGES RESOURCE CENTRE:

The short break centre for children with complex needs and disabilities was awarded outstanding by Ofsted in an inspection in July 2021. Bridges Resource Centre in Woodley gives high quality short breaks to children who have complex needs, learning and/or physical disabilities between the ages of 8 to 18.

NEW DESTINATION PLAY AREAS:

The destination play area at California Country Park opened in April. The play area includes a range of inclusive and interactive equipment – including a spinning disc, swings, musical chime walkway and a trampoline that are suitable for wheelchair users. Another destination play area will open at Cantley Park in Wokingham later in the year.

HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD (HAF) PROGRAMME:

The programme provided children across the borough with a summer of fun. Funded by the Department for Education and the council, the HAF programme offered weekly activities to children across the borough who were eligible for benefits-based free school meals. More than 650 children attended the five -week programme, with activities for primary, secondary and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), delivered in partnership with local organisations, and with over 10,000 free healthy meals provided.

UNICEF CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES AND COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

The borough council is now part of a global campaign to uphold and protect children's rights in everything it does. We have recently announced that we'll be working with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) after successfully applying to join its Child Friendly Cities and Communities initiative. This aims to give all children a meaningful say in decisions that shape their lives, whether on services like libraries or more specialist interventions for children in our care. We're one of eight local authorities in the UK to be accepted and it will take between three and five years before we're fully accredited.





LOCAL PLAN UPDATE:

More than 2,000 responses were received during the recent Revised Growth Strategy consultation

Wokingham Town Centre Regeneration: Continued to buck the national trend by attracting good quality businesses and national awards.

GORSE RIDE REDEVELOPMENT:

The first phase of the regeneration was completed in the summer of 2021 and consists of 46 new properties, 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 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 this summer.

SHINFIELD COMMUNITY CENTRE:

The centre was built in partnership with the University of Reading and Shinfield Parish Council and funded through developer contributions as part of the Shinfield West development. It opened to the public in November 2021.

GREENWAYS:

The first section of the Greenways Route B, which runs through Cantley Park, was completed in May 2021 and it is now being enjoyed by our residents and park users. The council has recently consulted on a new greenway route through Woosehill Meadows from Reading Road to Heron road as part of the larger Greenways Route B.

DELIVERING NEW HOMES:

Continued annual housing delivery of more than 1000 new homes and more than 200 new affordable homes in the past year, as continued build out of the existing Local Plan.

DECENT HOMES STANDARD:

For the second year running all of Wokingham Borough Council's social housing stock met the decent homes standard for condition and repair. The standard, which is set by central government and applies to all local councils, was put in place to ensure council homes met decent levels for things such as general repairs, heating and thermal comfort as well as having reasonably modern facilities such as kitchens and bathrooms.

Planning permission for Shinfield Studios granted in October 2021. The 85,000 sq m complex would be built on part of the Thames Valley Science Park to the south of the M4, which is earmarked for employment use in the council's local plan, plus additional land to the north and south of Cutbush Lane.

It would be used to produce major international films and television programmes and would have 18 film stages and eight workshops to support set production plus office facilities and other supporting infrastructure.

Planning consent for the South Wokingham major development in May 2021. Planning applications approved:

- South Wokingham distributor road main section – from the Eastern Gateway to Finchampstead Road
- Western Gateway – improved junction of Finchampstead Road and Molly Millars Lane
- up to 1,434 new homes, a primary school, a community facility, and nature parks
- up to 215 new homes to the east of the development, adjacent to Bigwood
- St Anne's SANG – a nature park of 7.83 hectares which will connect to Buckhurst Meadows





KEEPING THE BOROUGH MOVING



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£6million spent on road improvements: More than 130 roads across Wokingham Borough were improvements in the last year.

Wokingham Borough Council's annual road maintenance programme for 2020-21 is now complete, with more than £6million invested across the area. Work has been targeted to take place during lockdown periods since last April to make the most of quieter roads and reduce disruption for residents.

Investing in technology to reduce congestion – smart cameras and traffic lights : 80 video cameras were installed around the borough to help monitor traffic levels to help predict the exact impact of new housing on its road network.

The council was also awarded £250,000 for smart traffic lights and crossings across the area - these lights respond to traffic flows and so change phasing depending of time of day. Smart traffic light schemes are earmarked for ten locations across the borough.

SOUTH WOKINGHAM DISTRIBUTOR ROAD:

The Eastern Gateway, part of Wokingham Borough Council's South Wokingham Distributor Road, was opened in January 2022. The new road, which includes an off-road cycle path to encourage active travel, is among the new infrastructure for the authority's major development of 2,500 new homes at South Wokingham, which was agreed under its current Local Plan.

PARK AND RIDES:

Construction underway on the new park and ride at Coppid Beech and improvements to the Winnersh park and ride.

Barkham Bridge improvements: The project replaced the old narrow bridge with a two-lane bridge over the brook on Barkham Road. Before the changes between Barkham Street and Langley Common Road, a bottleneck existed at the old bridge but this has been removed and journeys are now smoother.

Wokingham Major Highways Project shortlisted for partnership Initiative of the Year at the British Construction Industry Awards. The council is nominated alongside contractor Balfour Beatty and SCAPE civil engineering.

Winnersh Relief Road opened: The new road opened in May 2021 in order to relieve congestion at the Winnersh Crossroads. It was part of the 2010 Core Strategy and funded by developer contributions

Beat the Streets scheme to encourage active travel among children and young people: Wokingham's Beat the Street saw more than 6,200 participants racking up 151,531 active travel miles. Beat the Street is a real-life game that challenges people to ditch the car and to walk, cycle or wheel to school to improve congestion and air quality.



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Barkham Solar Farm planning application approved in Sept 2021

The plan will see 67,340 solar panels installed on farmland to the north and south of Barkham Ride generating enough renewable energy to power thousands of local houses as well as reducing carbon emissions. The approved proposals include the planting of nearly 11,000 new trees on the site, wider landscaping to improve biodiversity and the creation of a new Greenway to better link Arborfield, Barkham and Finchampstead to the existing network of public rights of way to the north.

CEAP community engagement agreed – deliberative process bringing together residents and community groups from all backgrounds to share their thoughts on the best ways to tackle the climate emergency locally. Process approved in October 2021.

Garden Forest scheme: The scheme invites residents to apply for a tree, or trees, for their own garden. Over the next five years, we are looking to plant 250,000 trees across the borough to increase carbon sequestration rates. Carbon sequestration is a process whereby the trees will draw excess CO2 from the atmosphere and store it.

The Arborfield Cross Relief Road scooped an industry award for an innovative “green” bridge that helps animals move safely through the surrounding countryside. Observer Way, a 2.3km bypass with an off-road cycleway and paths which opened in November 2020, also includes a bridleway crossing with special features to provide a safe route for wildlife living nearby.

Solar panels installed at Shinfield St Mary’s Primary School 116 new solar panels installed on the school roof, allowing it to massively increase the amount of sustainable energy generated on site.

Our Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) rated one of the best in the country

Independent national organisation, Climate Emergency UK, have benchmarked of local council’s Climate Action Plans across the UK & Northern Ireland. And Wokingham Borough’s is rated 8th best Single Tier Authority in the UK for our Climate Emergency Action Plan. The CEAP scored very highly across all the key focus areas, and got full marks on some of the key ones such as Education, Ecological Emergency and Governance.



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