



**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL AND  
WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
WORKING TOGETHER**

**LOCAL COMMITTEE FOR WOKING  
22 OCTOBER 2003**

**KEY ISSUE:**

Surrey County Council Local Committee for Woking and Woking Borough Council share a mutual concern to improve the quality of life and well-being of the people of Woking. The two authorities can achieve more working together than separately.

**SUMMARY:**

The report recommends that Surrey County Council Local Committee for Woking and Woking Borough Council create a joint project to improve the quality of the town centre, with a pooled budget and joint decision-making; and that this is a pilot for closer working on other topics in future. It is important that a firm proposal is identified in early course.

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**The Committee is asked to:**

- **support the approach outlined in this report for a project for improving the street scene and the environment in the town centre with a ring-fenced budget to which both Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council contribute**
- **request Woking Borough Council to consider participating in a joint partnership to improve the quality of the environment in the town centre and to make a financial contribution**
- **instruct Surrey County Council Local Director and Local Transportation Director, and invite Woking Borough Council officers, to prepare a paper covering the project's objectives, budget, decision-making arrangements and co-ordinated implementation and monitoring**
- **ask officers to develop proposals about how the two authorities could work together on other topics for consideration at a future meeting.**

## **INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND**

1. Surrey County Council Local Committees were launched in April 2002, one in each of 11 boroughs/districts in the county. All Surrey County Council Members elected for the borough/district are automatically members of the Local Committee. Surrey County Council invites Borough/District Councils to send the same a matching number of members to Local Committee meetings, though to vote only on transportation matters. Woking Borough Council has accepted this invitation, but only in relation to transportation matters.
2. Surrey County Council has given Local Committees four main functions:
  - Decision making on delegated and devolved budgets
  - Performance review of local County Council services
  - Improved engagement with public
  - Advocacy to the Surrey County Council Executive and other agencies
3. They have budget responsibilities in relation to
  - community safety (approx £18,000 a year)
  - well-being (approx £100,000 a year)
  - Highways and transportation, and schemes under the local transport plan
  - capital (£100,000 a year).
4. All transport decisions are made within the policy framework of the Local Transport Plan. Each Local Committee makes a bid to the Surrey County Council Executive for what it wants to spend locally to meet the objectives of the Local Transport Plan; the Executive decides on major schemes, and also makes a local allocation. The total delegated to the Local Committee for Woking in 2003/04 is around £650,000.
5. For road maintenance, the Surrey County Council Executive provides a block sum to each district, with an allocation to various specific maintenance activities. The Local Committee can vire up to 30% of total budget between these activities. The total maintenance budget for Woking for 2003/04 is around £1.3 million.
6. The small capital allocation is given on the presumption that it will be used for a specific improvement that supplements local highways and transportation spend, but it can be used for capital schemes in other service areas.

## **WORKING TOGETHER**

7. Surrey County Council Local Committee for Woking and Woking Borough Council share a mutual concern to improve their quality of life and well-being of the people of Woking. The two authorities can achieve more working together than individually. "Working together" can mean anything on a spectrum from pooling budgets and decision-making to avoiding duplication through a clear definition of responsibilities and timetables.

8. On 2 July and 17 September 2003, Members of Surrey County Council Local Committee for Woking and Woking Borough Council Executive met informally to identify issues of joint concern in relation to the town centre, and to explore how the two authorities could work together more closely on this and other issues of joint interest. This report is based on their conclusions.
9. We should avoid trying to do too much and so achieving little. It is therefore recommended that the two authorities start working together on one specific project: improving the street scene and the quality of the environment in the town centre.

## **IMPROVING THE STREET SCENE AND THE QUALITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE TOWN CENTRE**

### **The proposal**

10. It is suggested that there should be a ring-fenced budget for this project and that both Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council should contribute to this budget. Reports about its use would be transportation items, with decisions taken by the Local Committee with equal numbers of Members from Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council.
11. This would achieve a high priority outcome for both Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council. Surrey County Council has prioritised improving the street scene, and is developing several new initiatives. This proposal will at least complement these initiatives, and may be eligible for additional support through the schemes. Woking Borough Council attaches great importance to maintaining and improving the environmental quality of the town centre and is committed to securing its long-term economic viability and vitality. The town centre is also a police priority area. The Borough Inspector has already been talking to the Local Transportation Director about how to make the town centre safer, looking for example at taxi ranks; lighting; alleys; road layout; and public transport stops.
12. The timing is good, with a window of opportunity created by the forthcoming review of the Local Plan, the development of the next five-year Local Transport Plan, the forthcoming results of the Examination in Public on the Structure Plan, and central Government interest in "living streets".

## **PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSALS**

13. To achieve this requires agreement between the two authorities on:
  - the aim and objectives
  - the budget for this project (old or new money)
  - delegated powers
  - co-ordinated implementation and monitoring.

14. In addition, any proposals must have regard to the powers and duties vested in the respective authorities.

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

15. The draft aim of the project is to increase the well-being of people using Woking town centre by improving the street scene and quality of the environment. The draft objectives are to use resources more effectively, to make decisions about priorities and allocation in collaboration, to avoid duplication of effort and to work co-operatively. Initially, the project will encompass relatively small improvements. The programme might include work in relation to street cleaning, flowers, vandalism, surfacing, street furniture, cycle routes, cycling on the pavement, graffiti, and other subjects. The objectives need to be refined, and the details of the programme formulated.

## **THE BUDGET**

16. Not all outputs would cost money. For example, with better liaison and co-ordination, it may be worth exploring the use of contractors more efficiently so that (for example) the same person cleans street signs, cuts back foliage over signs, and straightens signs that have been knocked. Co-ordinated planning would get better value for money – for example, ideally we could avoid digging up newly re-surfaced roads.

17. Of course, money is also needed. Possible sources of funding include:

- identifying all the sums which would, in any case, have been spent on the town centre from different budgets and making them explicit as part of the project
- using the capital allocation to the committee
- bidding for the project as part of the Local Transport Plan bid – which depends on the outcomes of the Town Centre Access Study
- extra funding through possible future Surrey County Council initiatives for improving the street scene, if applications succeed
- Government funding, if applications succeed (for example, an application has been made for the Liveability Fund)
- Funding in the form of planning benefits via Section 106 agreements in appropriate cases
- if it is decided that County Hall will be at Brewery Road, making a case for a special allocation for the project.

All these need to be explored by officers, and firm proposals made.

## **DELEGATED DECISION-MAKING POWERS**

18. Surrey County Council need make no changes to its decision-making powers; Woking Borough Council is examining options for the Borough.

## CO-ORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING.

19. A variety of town centre groups involving officers and members of various agencies lead to overlapping discussions and make it difficult to focus on a few priorities. It will be important to identify what forums exist, their terms of reference and powers, and how other partners are best consulted and involved in setting priorities, how all available resources can be deployed as effectively as possible, and how the work can be monitored and the project evaluated, without diffusing responsibility for setting priorities, allocating finances and doing the work. *Safer Woking* also needs to be involved.
20. Officers will bring a report to the Local Committee in January 2004 on all these issues, and will:
- identify possible funding arrangements;
  - identify the decisions needed to meet legal requirements
  - propose how to co-ordinate funding, implementation and monitoring from Surrey County Council, Woking Borough Council and other sources.
21. It is important that a firm proposal is identified in early course, so that the proposal and its budget (where applicable) and other resource implications can be built into each authority's spending and service plans and respective work programmes. If the proposition before the Local Committee is to be of lasting value, it must not be regarded as a one-off or "add-on" to existing activities: defining and harmonising the objectives of a scheme within them is critical, and this takes time.

## OTHER POSSIBLE AREAS OF JOINT WORK

22. There are other areas where Surrey County Council Local Committee for Woking and Woking Borough Council could consider working more closely together to improve their quality of life and well-being of the people of Woking. For example the two authorities might develop a joint vision of what Woking needs and of how to achieve it, taking into account the Structure Plan and Transport Strategy, and agree how to make best use of land and property to benefit the people of Woking, and secure the necessary infrastructure and services, whoever provides them. They might address quality of life and well-being, building on the work of the Community Safety partnership on such issues as reassurance and community cohesion; provision for young people; health, especially health inequalities; and waste
23. Officers will consider how the two authorities could work together on other topics, building on the results of the town centre project outlined in this report, and will bring a report to a meeting of the Local Committee in 2004.

**Report by: Christine Holloway, Local Director for Woking following consultation with Douglas Spinks, Executive Director, Woking Borough Council**

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

- **Agenda and notes of informal private meeting between Members of Surrey County Council Local Committee for Woking and Woking Borough Council Executive on 2 July 2003**
- **Joint paper from Christine Holloway, Local Director for Woking, and Douglas Spinks, Executive Director, Woking Borough Council, for informal private meeting between Members of Surrey County Council Local Committee for Woking and Woking Borough Council Executive on 17 September 2003**

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