

## **Annex A**

ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 20 JUNE 2005

**WOKING TOWN CENTRE**

**Summary**

At its meeting of the 11 April 2005, the Committee discussed the general condition of Woking Town Centre, noting that improvements were needed to develop the area. It was resolved that a combination of Officers, Ward Councillors and the County Steward be invited to walk round Woking Town Centre to highlight particular areas of concern.

This report presents a brief outline of the issues and ongoing work being undertaken in the Town Centre by the Council and its various partners to further develop and enhance the area.

**Recommendations**

The Committee is requested to:

**RESOLVE That**

This Woking Town Centre progress report be received and duly considered.

**Background Papers:**

None

**Reporting Persons:**

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting of the 11 April 2005, the Committee resolved that appropriate officers, Ward Councillors and the County Steward be invited to walk round the Woking Town Centre to highlight areas of concern. It was also asked that a report, outlining these concerns as well as detailing the current and planned work for the Town Centre, be prepared and presented to this meeting.
- 1.2 A meeting was arranged for 13 May 2005 to which the Ward Councillors and the County Steward were invited. Unfortunately, two of the Ward Councillors were unable to attend as well as the County Steward. The site visit went ahead with Councillor R Leach and the Neighbourhood Officer for the Town Centre, Mr D Richards. The findings of this visit are listed below and reflect the observations and concerns expressed by Councillor Leach:
- The need to retain green areas;
  - Station subway – floor surface, walls and lighting in a poor condition;
  - Would like to see bicycles removed from the Albion Square railings to open spaces close to Heathside Car Park;
  - Bicycles parked for the station by rail users should be stored on platform 1 of the station;
  - Restoration works to the town centre murals to be done as soon as possible;
  - Move the market to Commercial Way or another location;
  - Move existing bus-stops in Cawsey Way to the Broadway;
  - Consider making the High Street a one-way system and take the existing road through the market to exit by Victoria Arch whilst turning part of the area into a pedestrian zone;
  - Move taxi ranks from the station to Cawsey Way;
  - Further greening of the High Street needed;
  - Give consideration as to how best to utilise the former Courts Furniture store at 8-10 High Street which has been empty for around 10 years;
  - Review rents which are causing small businesses to close;
  - Review the poor condition of the ad-hoc paving throughout the town;
  - Planters in Commercial Way in a poor condition.
- 1.3 The points raised above will need to be addressed with the relevant agencies whilst paying heed to other initiatives, discussed below, that are taking place around the Commercial Way and more general Town Centre area.

## 2.0 Town Centre Management Initiatives (Ray Lee)

- 2.1 The Town Centre Management was established to promote and market the Town and therefore rarely gets involved in criticising the town environment. Indeed many of the members believe that the Town spends too much time concentrating on its weaknesses and not promoting its successes. However, over the last three years the initiative has been involved in, promoted or negotiated for a number of improvements in the Town.

These include:

- Improved street lighting in Chertsey Road.
- Development of the Town Square Usage Policy which in this case is aimed at restricting further damage to the surface.
- Sponsorship of the new cover for the Town Centre Buggy.
- Painting of white lines on various steps to assist movement of the visually impaired.
- Painting of the Bandstand.

- Cleaning of bus shelters and replacement of the old shelter in Cawsey Way.
- Pruning of trees.
- Cleaning and painting of Peacocks Walk.

Work currently being undertaken includes:

- The development of a plan for Commercial Way to make best use of the space, improve the vista, make better use of trees and planters.
- Provision of new Town Centre Maps.
- Improving the sense of arrival in the Town.

### 3.0 Joint Woking Borough Council / Surrey County Council Initiative (Ray Lee)

3.1 At its meeting on 2 September 2004, the Executive resolved that a capital contribution of £25,000 is allocated from the Investment Programme to a Town Centre Maintenance project with the aim of improving:

- The junction of Goldsworth Road and Church Street East;
- Seating in Commercial Way; and
- Town Centre maps boards (to align with TCM providing new maps).

3.2 This is 50% funding with the rest being provided by Surrey County Council. This intended scheme will be completed within this financial year.

### 4.0 Town Centre Maintenance (Ian Draper / Dave Ward)

4.1 **Planned Maintenance:** The Council will be carrying out work in the Town Centre this summer as part of it's Planned Maintenance programme. This will include:

- Creation of an enclosed refuse storage area between Crown Square and the Chertsey Road for the benefit of Big Apple, HG Wells and Gala Bingo
- The Hawker Hunter ('plane on a stick') situated in Crown Square will be undergoing a Safety Inspection, overhaul and repaint.
- Martian, Crown Square. Annual maintenance and safety inspection.
- Work to the War Memorial, to clean and re-enamel the lettering where required
- Treatment to the edges of the steps in Town Square (to assist partially sighted people) is being reviewed and will be implemented when an effective and lasting solution can be found.

4.2 **Environmental Maintenance:** Currently, there are a number of maintenance tasks undertaken by Surrey County Council (SCC), Woking Borough Council (WBC) and it's Environmental Maintenance partner, Serco. The tasks can be summarised as follows:

- |  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| • Maintenance and repair of the 'public highway' | SCC             |
| • Maintenance and care of planters               | SCC/ WBC/ Serco |
| • Lighting                                       | SCC             |
| • Hanging basket columns                         | WBC             |
| • Trees  | SCC/WBC/Serco   |
| • Street furniture repair/replace                | WBC             |
| • Sweeping and cleaning of surface               | WBC/Serco       |
| • Emptying/ servicing of litter bins             | WBC/Serco       |

**5.0 Local Development Framework and Enquiry by Design (Penny Haysom)**

5.1 Consultation with the Citizens Panel carried out in the autumn of 2004, as part of the preparation of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, found that "Improved Streets and Spaces" was the most popular improvement that could be made to the town centre. This was identified by over 50% of respondents as a top priority improvement. Future development in the town centre is one of key ways of achieving such improvements.

5.2 This will require policies in the LDF Core Strategy, possibly backed up by some more specific guidance. Any specific guidance needs to be effective in delivering improved streets and spaces without being over-prescriptive about the overall form of development. The town centre is a very dynamic place, where development opportunities can change rapidly, and any guidance needs to recognise this. Officers are currently studying the best way to address this issue. This is being informed by the experience of having held a Civitas workshop in November 2004, hosted by the Princes Trust, which explored the opportunities to improve the overall design quality of development in Woking town centre.

**6.0 Audit of the Town Centre Art (Chris Fairlamb)**

6.1 The Council has responsibility for a number of Public Art Assets in the vicinity of the Town Centre. Many of these were secured as planning benefits from the granting of planning permission for major developments in the Town Centre, others were commissioned directly by the Council to celebrate or commemorate events of historic importance to the Town. An audit of Town Centre Art is being undertaken and it will be necessary in some cases to make proper provision for the maintenance and repair of some of the pieces.

6.2 Consideration is currently being given to the restoration of the High Street Mural; after this other pieces of Art in need of restoration or repair will be prioritised.

**7.0 Applications for further Town Centre Improvements (Chris Fairlamb)**

7.1 There are a number of sites in the Town Centre for which pre-application discussions for major developments are currently taking place, which are likely to result in significant improvements to the public realm in accordance with the Council's adopted policy. As a number of these pre-application discussions are in commercial confidence they cannot be reported at this time. The following development proposals have already been publicly announced.

- Crown House – Application 2005/0356 has been submitted for extension to the existing building. As there are significant works of art in the vicinity the applicants have offered a sum of £5,000 towards the commissioning of a Public Art strategy for the Town Centre.
- Guildford Road / Bradfield Close – Wates has undertaken public consultation on the possible development of this area. Although proposals are still at a formative stage the development is likely to result in the creation of significant new areas of landscaped public realm, including areas for the siting of new works of Public Art to be funded by the development.

7.2 In addition to the above, a number of other legal agreements with developers have been signed and the table below indicates the associated benefits the schemes will bring:

## Woking Town Centre

Application	Site Location	Description of Benefit	Date Signed
2003/1203	49 -77 Victoria Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of landscape improvements to Brookhouse Common.</li> <li>Commissioning artist to design metalwork entrance gates and railings</li> </ul>	18/06/2004
2003/0931	95 – 111 Goldsworth Rd	Landscape improvements to street frontage	11/08/2004
2003/0389	Telephone Exchange Site. Station Approach Centrium 1	Contribution of £9.6k to public art (on site)	07/07/2004
2002/1417	Former Railway yard Victoria Road Centrium 2	Contribution of £48k to Public art / environmental enhancement works	02/09/2003
1999/0946 1997/0808	64 Goldsworth Road	Provision of street tree planting	24/02/2000
1999/0320 1997/0834	31 – 43 Goldsworth Road	Contribution of £5k towards environmental improvements	14/06/1999

### 8.0 Implications

#### Financial

8.1 None directly associated with this report.

#### Human Resource/Training and Development

8.2 None directly associated with this report.

#### Environmental/Sustainability/Community Safety

8.3 None directly associated with this report.

### 9.0 Conclusions

9.1 Many different agencies and interests operate in the Town Centre and there is no single way of addressing all the matters of concern. However, through partnership and collaborative initiatives much is already being done to improve the environment of the Town Centre. There is no room for complacency and more needs to be done as opportunities arise and when resources permit.

REPORT ENDS

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