

Working Together for Woking

Woking Community Strategy Review 2006

Back in 2002, local people were asked to think about the future of Woking and identify the aspects of community life that matter most to them. The result was the Community Strategy, an aspirational document detailing clear aims for the future and requiring the support of many local organisations in the Borough.

Four years on, the Community Strategy continues to be at the heart of Woking's development and it has recently undergone a review to ensure that it still reflects the aims of local organisations and residents.

This special report summarises the story so far and explains the role of the strategy in the future of the Borough.



A partnership approach to progress

The Community Strategy was originally put together by the **Woking Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)**, a group of key local organisations, keen to work together to improve life for the residents of Woking. Acknowledging that they could do more together than alone, the organisations pledged a joint commitment to deliver the strategy's aims back in 2002 and they continue to work towards and monitor progress for the benefit of the Borough.

At present, the partnership consists of:

- Woking Borough Council
- Surrey County Council
- Surrey Heath and Woking Primary Care Trust
- Woking Association for Voluntary Service

- Surrey Police
- Woking Chamber of Trade and Commerce
- Woking Community Learning Partnership

Many other local groups and organisations such as Local Agenda 21, The Shah Jehan Mosque and North West Surrey Association of Disabled People also contribute to the LSP through a network of linked partners. This allows a wide range of views, ideas and expertise to be fed into the partnership without the need to get tens of people around the same table at the same time.

The story so far

Following the consultation in 2002, six key themes were identified to sum up the hopes and aspirations of Woking's people. These key themes were:

- A **strong community spirit** with a clear sense of belonging and responsibility.

- A clean, healthy and safe **environment**.
- A **transport system** that is integrated and accessible, recognising Woking's potential as a transport hub.
- Access to **quality and affordable housing** for local people and key workers.
- A community which values personal **health and well-being**.
- Integrated and accessible local **facilities and services**.

All of the LSP partners incorporated these into their work and, over the last few years, progress has been made in each of the six areas. More information about the LSP can be found on the Window on Woking website at www.windowonwoking.org.uk



Moving forward

Conscious that good strategies need to move with the times, the LSP embarked on a review of the Community Strategy at the end of 2005 to assess whether the key themes still reflect the priorities of the organisations and the hopes of the community.

Several consultation exercises with both partners and members of the community revealed that five of the six themes are still priorities for the people of Woking. However, the LSP identified that learning was missing from the strategy's aims and suggested that a new theme should be added.

New theme

Provide opportunities and encourage people to participate in learning throughout their lives so they progress and reach their full potential.

In the revised Community Strategy, this new theme will replace the original sixth theme "Integrated and accessible local facilities and services". It is now felt that the essence of this is covered in the remaining five themes and does not need to be specifically mentioned.

The revised themes that will take the LSP into the future are listed below along with some examples of the type of work that is now being carried out to make progress against each of them.

Theme 1

A strong community spirit with a clear sense of belonging and responsibility.

- Giving local people a voice which encourages participation and is heard by decision-makers.
- Ensuring that there is fair and equal access to services and facilities.
- Providing resources and facilities to enable local communities to help themselves.

- Working towards a more caring community by encouraging a better understanding of different cultures, religion and beliefs, generations and lifestyles.

In the last 12 months, the LSP has worked with **older people** to develop a strategy setting out ways that partners can work together to develop a joint approach to improving independent living for older people. Entitled 'Positive Lifestyles', the strategy looks at the changing needs of older people and outlines ways that these needs could be met.



The LSP has also been supportive of Woking's new community website, Window on Woking, which gives local groups and organisations the opportunity to host their own web pages, free of charge. The LSP now has its own pages up there and can be found under www.windowonwoking.org.uk

WINDOW ON WOKING

Theme 2

A clean, healthy and safe environment.

- Keeping the environment clean and encouraging everyone to respect it.
- Conserving green spaces and ensuring they are accessible.
- Helping people to feel safe in their community.
- Ensuring that when new areas are built the local infrastructure grows with it.
- Promoting and encouraging schemes and actions that minimise waste and increase recycling.
- Promoting actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, respond to the challenges of climate change and encourage sustainable development.

The LSP is closely aligned to the **Safer Woking Partnership** and supports projects concerning issues such as domestic abuse, drug and alcohol abuse and distraction burglary.



Safer Woking has recently appointed a new Anti-social Behaviour Case Worker to address some residents' concerns about anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhoods.

Recycling continues to be a key priority for the Council and the Borough as a whole. In particular, work is currently ongoing to investigate the possibility of kerbside collections of glass to ensure that we recycle as much as possible.

Theme 3

A transport system that is linked and accessible, recognising Woking's potential as a transport hub.

- Working to develop all forms of travel to ensure they are accessible, interlink and contribute towards reducing congestion.
- Exploring ways of improving community and public transport.
- Promote linked up regional transport schemes, such as the rail hub and access to Heathrow airport, to enhance economic prosperity.

To help reduce the number of cars on our roads, the **Surrey Car Share** scheme has recently been introduced and is already encouraging local people to think differently about their transport arrangements.



A dedicated website www.surreycarshare.com tells people exactly how to get involved and provides helpful information and advice.

The LSP is keen to help reduce the number of people killed or injured in road collisions and supports the use of vehicle activated signs that light up to warn drivers of a hazard ahead. The signs are activated if vehicles are travelling above the speed limit or too fast to safely negotiate the hazard. Posters to remind drivers of the hazards and the speed limit will be used in the future and police intend to reinforce the campaign.

Theme 4

Access to decent affordable housing for local people and key workers.

- Exploring through policy and action, ways in which all local people have a reasonable expectation of a decent, appropriate and affordable place to live.
- Exploring ways in which an imaginative architectural approach might meet housing need.
- Examining potential schemes for subsidising 'key worker' housing.

The Council is seeking to address the shortage in affordable housing through Priority Homes, a new government-supported project to create over 100 new homes for local people. Although the project is still in its early stages, the Council is keen to move ahead with this to address housing need.

The LSP works closely with Woking Borough Council planners to ensure that the social and community **infrastructure** (facilities like schools, health and social care centres) will be able to serve future development in the Borough. This "common understanding of needs" project has not identified any significant shortfalls so far, but will be regularly reviewed. There have been concerns from local people in the past that infrastructure is not provided until after new housing developments are occupied. This project aims to make sure that this does not happen in the future.

Theme 5

A community which values personal health and well-being.

- Improving access to information so that individuals can minimise preventable health problems.
- Concentrating resources on developing services which are accessible for disadvantaged vulnerable members of the community.
- Promoting emotional and spiritual well-being by encouraging support structures that help individuals live life to the full.
- Encouraging the use of key leisure and recreational opportunities to assist people to keep themselves fit and healthy.
- Working towards a system that enables all people to access health and social services in a simple and logical way.

The LSP is now leading on a project to encourage local businesses and organisations to be **smoke-free** before national legislation is brought in next summer (2007). Keen to spread the message that everyone has the right to a smoke-free environment, the LSP is providing help and advice to both businesses/organisations and individuals who are looking to kick the habit.



LSP partners are keen to explore ways of encouraging more people to use local **leisure facilities**. The Leisure Centre and Pool in the Park provide a wide range of leisure activities and plans are being developed to create facilities in other parts of the community such as at Bishop David Brown School.

Theme 6

Provide opportunities and encourage people to participate in learning throughout their lives so they progress and reach their full potential.



- Promoting opportunities for every child and young person to be happy and confident by matching school and leisure provision to the individual's needs.
- Improving access to specialist training for work to meet Woking's vibrant and diverse economy.
- Focusing resources on developing learning in communities who need them most.
- Providing opportunities for people who would benefit from improved basic skills so that they increase the choices available to them.

- Supporting learning initiatives that enable families to improve their quality of life.
- Ensuring access to information that improves participation and enables progression in learning throughout life.

The 'Hands On' project in Lakeview runs twice weekly computer classes for residents and is starting a Drop-in ICT clinic run by volunteers for local residents to use.



Also available is information and advice for people trying to find work and training. LSP partners have supported the Residents' Action Group to find funding for a Family Outreach Worker who works in the Parents and Toddler Group and delivers parenting courses.



Leading the way

The current Chair of the LSP is Peter Kleyn from Woking Chamber of Trade and Commerce.



As a local resident, keen member of Woking's business arena and contributor to many community initiatives, Peter appreciates the

importance of the Community Strategy: "This document clearly outlines the issues that matter the most to our local people and it is therefore extremely important that both private and public organisations place the strategy at the heart of their business. The Local Strategic Partnership helps organisations to remain focused on the strategy's aims and monitors progress against them".

For more information

More information about the Local Strategic Partnership, including minutes of meetings and annual reports, is available on the partnership's pages on Window on Woking www.windowonwoking.org.uk

Enquiries can also be directed to Woking Borough Council on **01483 755855** or email policy@woking.gov.uk