

Wokingham Borough Council Plan

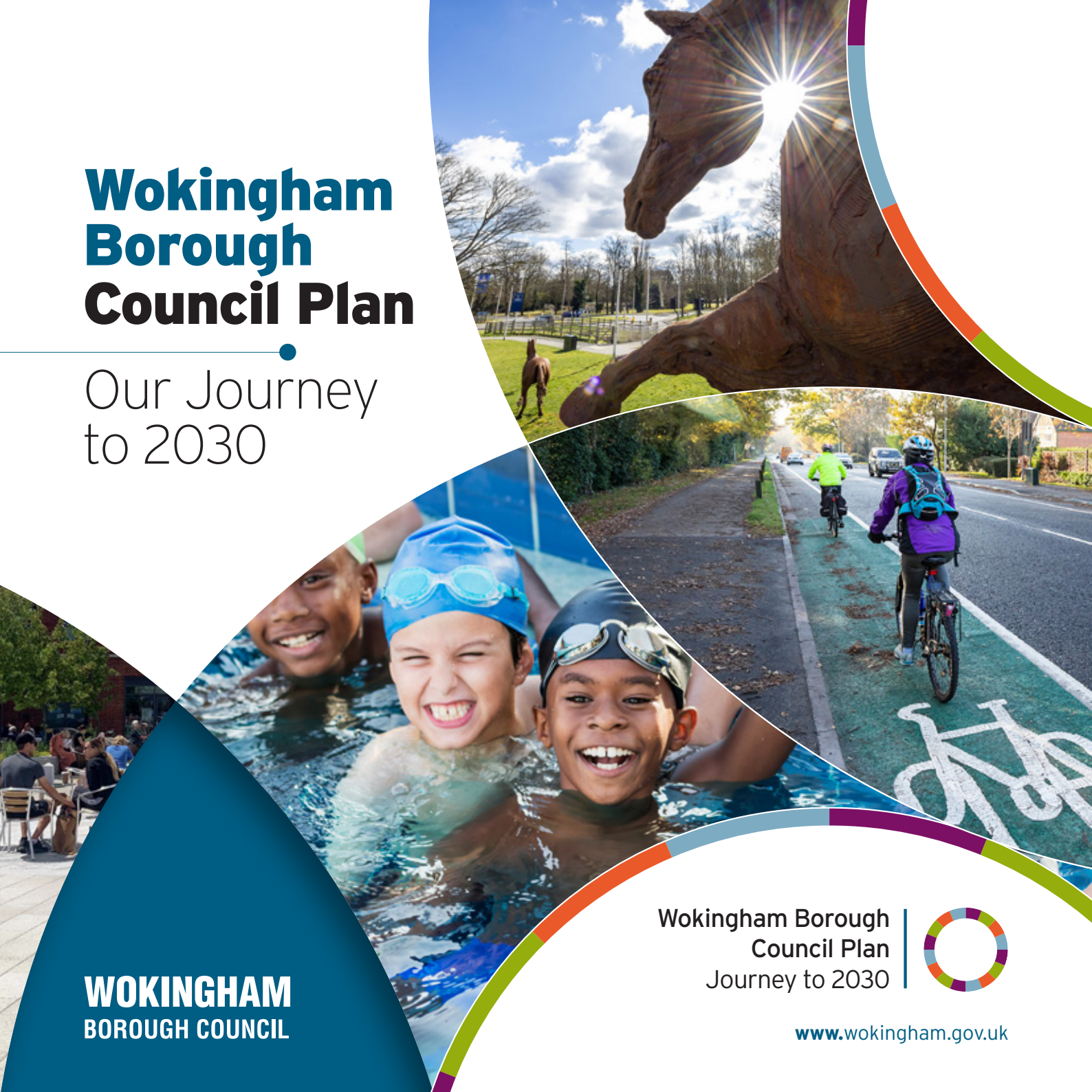
Our Journey
to 2030

WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Wokingham Borough
Council Plan
Journey to 2030



www.wokingham.gov.uk



Foreword

We are excited to share Wokingham Borough Council's new plan 2025 - 2030. This is our promise to continue to work together to make our communities vibrant and welcoming for everyone.

This plan is informed and shaped by the longer-term Wokingham Communities Vision, and we have set out the Council's contributions to the six ambitions created by our communities.

Over the past year, we've engaged with around 5000 residents, colleagues, and partners to understand their priorities.



This plan reflects our shared ambition and outlines our aspirations for our borough.

We are proud to be an award-winning council and are committed to continue providing high-quality support and services that meet the needs of our communities. Everything in this plan is designed to build a better Wokingham Borough for current and future generations.

We want Wokingham Borough to be a place where everyone can thrive. Together, we can achieve our shared ambitions and create even stronger communities in a borough that we are proud to call home.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement.

Stephen Conway
Leader of Wokingham Borough Council

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive

Introduction

Our aim is to create a borough where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. We are committed to empowering our community and listening to those with lived experiences to shape the services we provide.

Our plan outlines the Council's focus for the next five years. It details our priorities, how we measure progress, and how we aim to achieve our ambitions.

We have considered our communities' needs, current priorities, projects, and the challenging economic and environmental conditions. Our plan helps us focus our limited budget on the essential services we have a duty to provide and tackling the issues our residents care most about.

The breadth and depth of our partnership ambition and harnessing of community power is what makes us distinctive. We see our role as enablers and we want to inspire rather than control action in others.

We are investing where we can in place, people and partnerships, so that our communities lead gloriously ordinary lives now and in the years to come.



2030

2029

2028

2027

2026

2025

| Our Borough



More information about our borough can be found on the [Wokingham Borough Observatory](#).

Children and Young People

The borough has excellent activities and facilities for local children and is rated as no.1 in the country for childcare per head of the population.

 Around **45,600** (25%) of our population are age 0-18

3,200 (8%) of children under 16 live in low-income households

 **15%** of children have special educational needs (including Education Health and Care Plans)

94% of local schools are rated good or outstanding

 Currently **118** different main languages are spoken by children going to school in Wokingham


Community

Our communities are vibrant and welcoming.

 **15%** increase in population since the last census with **177,500** people now living in Wokingham Borough

Ranked as the **2nd** least deprived borough in the country

However, national measures of deprivation mask those individuals and families living in hardship

 **24%** population growth among those aged 65+ since the last census

Place

The borough has plenty of green spaces and benefits from thriving town and village centres.

 **3** Country Parks and **31** Natures Reserves covering an area of over **600** hectares alongside more than **300** hectares of more formal public open spaces, equivalent to 5% of the borough

 **16** larger public parks and over **100** children's play areas

 **9,500** new homes built with **3,300** affordable homes including social housing regeneration

 **60** new businesses and over **1000** new jobs created since 2020

Adults

Most adults live healthy and fulfilling lives, in independence and choice.

439 (91%) of adults with learning disabilities live in their own home or with their family

 **71%** of adults are physically active

 **78%** of working age population are employed

 **65%** of adults are considered overweight or obese

On average, males will live for **83** years and females for **86**. Males will spend **70** of these years in good health, females **71**. However, in our more deprived neighbourhoods, life expectancy is shortened by **4** years for males and **5** years for females.

Our Mission

Our Mission is:

We work with and for our communities to make sure everyone has the opportunity to thrive; being able to start well, live well, and age well in Wokingham Borough.



Our Ambition for 2030

Our ambition over the next five years is to continue to work towards creating a thriving Borough that is:



- **Fair** - residents have equitable access to opportunities, services, and support.
- **Green** - the surroundings are clean, sustainable, and have plenty of green spaces for all to enjoy, and we all contribute towards reducing our carbon footprint.
- **Safe** - people who live, work in, or visit our borough feel safe and secure.
- **Connected** - we have strong communities enabled by accessible travel, a resilient economy, opportunities for people to connect with one another, and digital services which bring people together.



Our Approach - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

People matter to us. Inclusion is essential to all four council plan themes and achieving our mission. We consider Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in all that we do, so that Wokingham Borough can be:

- A borough where people trust and respect each other.
- A place where everyone feels they belong.
- A place where services are accessible for everyone.

Our Council will:

- Listen to our residents and make changes to improve people's lives.
- Ensure our recruitment approach is fair and open to all.
- Be a place where everyone can be themselves and feel valued at work.



Read more about our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in our EDI Policy 2025-29.

An Award-winning Council

Wokingham Borough Council strives to do the very best for our residents and we are proud that our work has been recognised in the following ways:

Local Authority of the Year

In 2025 Wokingham Borough Council was a finalist in the Local Authority of the Year category at the Municipal Journal (MJ) Achievement Awards.

Wokingham town centre regeneration

In July 2021, won the mixed-use category at the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Europe Award for Excellence, and won the "Innovation in Delivering Sustainability and Social Value" category at the 2023 MJ Achievement Awards.

Adult Social Care Specialist Accommodation (ASCSA) Programme

In 2023 won the "Best Social Housing Initiative" category at the MJ Achievement Awards.

Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel (TLIP)

In 2023 won the 'Excellence in Community-led Decision Making' category at the Affordable Housing Awards. Also, a finalist in the 2023 MJ Achievement Awards.

JOY Social Prescribing App

In 2024 won the "Digital Impact" category at the 2024 Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards. The JOY app was also a finalist at the 2023 MJ Achievement Awards.

Dinton Activity Centre and the expansion of Addington Special Education Needs school

In 2021 shortlisted for seven design and construction accolades at the Offsite Construction, the British Construction Industry (BCI) and the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) awards.



Delivering the Plan

In our work we will continue to:

- 🌀 Safeguard our financial stability to make sure we use our resources to deliver the best value for money services.
- 🌀 Be there for those who need us the most, including helping early to provide better support and outcomes.
- 🌀 Put people at the heart of all we do, following the principles in our Customer Experience Charter.
- 🌀 Make decisions based on data, together with insight from engagement with others and by using our skills and experience to design services with our residents.
- 🌀 Deliver efficient, sustainable, innovative, digitally enabled services.
- 🌀 Work with partners to get the best outcomes for our residents using our Partnership Framework.
- 🌀 Embody the Council's values and demonstrate the Council's behaviours every day.
- 🌀 Be committed to continuous improvement.

Some examples

- ✔ Wokingham is ranked 5th out of 149 councils in the IMPOWER Productivity Index: this reflects our ability to achieve good outcomes cost-effectively for our residents.
- ✔ The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Resilience Index continues to show Wokingham's overall financial position as strong compared to other Councils, taking into account a number of key financial indicators such as reserves and external debt.
- ✔ We have co-produced a new People Strategy with our workforce and refreshed our values.
- ✔ We have introduced the use of "Microsoft Power BI" reporting technology so our data can be shared easily which informs everything that we are doing.
- ✔ We have been selected by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) to join their AI Trail Blazer Programme to test and make use of AI tools developed by Central Government. This will provide the Council with early access to innovative tools.
- ✔ Co-production with our residents and partners of our services and strategies produces the best and most efficient work.



Key strategies

Our Council Plan will be delivered through our key strategies.

Progress will be reported at public Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings, supported via the Key Performance Indicators.

Our Council Plan is aligned with the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which is the financial articulation of the council plan and sets the strategic financial direction for the organisation.



The main strategies delivering the Council Plan include:

- Adult Social Care Strategy
- Affordable Housing Strategy
- Children's Services Strategy
- Climate Emergency Action Plan
- Community Safety Partnership Strategy
- Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Customer Experience
- Economic Development Strategy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Local Plan
- Local Transport Plan
- People Strategy



Themes

The main themes of the plan are captured below, these are our areas of focus for the next five years.





What we have achieved

We are committed to achieving the best outcomes for all residents by addressing inequalities. With help from the Institute of Health Equity, the Council has become a 'Marmot Borough'.

This means we are using local insights and lived experiences to reshape support for everyone, particularly those most in need.

As part of the Social Care Future movement, the Council is working with communities to make a real difference and create an inclusive borough.

There has been a focus on special education needs in response to the increasing number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and additional needs.

35% of all new homes have been built as affordable housing to support the rising challenge of housing costs across the Borough.

Some examples

- ✔ We share power with people as equals by becoming involved in the Social Care Future movement.
- ✔ We are number one in the UK for adults with a learning disability in paid employment.
- ✔ We are the first in the country to use directed support for people who need care.
- ✔ We have co-produced a new SEND and Inclusion Strategy to make sure we continue to support children and young people with additional needs.
- ✔ We have invested in accommodation for care leavers across the Borough.
- ✔ We have created the Hardship Alliance with the voluntary sector to tackle poverty, opening a community pantry and supporting 5,414 children by reducing the cost of the school day.
- ✔ We have invested in schools across the Borough including building or securing seven additional schools, plus major expansions creating 1200 new school places.
- ✔ We have submitted a new local plan with an increased affordable housing target of 40%.
- ✔ We have a forum with our partners called Voices for Inclusion and Equality where we work to build vibrant, welcoming communities.

Where we are going

Priority 1

Residents report feeling empowered to support and develop their communities and an increased sense of belonging, because of our work to reduce inequalities and promote inclusion.

Priority 2

Residents are supported to improve their circumstances, including support with debt, employment, and job opportunities.

Priority 3

Residents have access to a range of education, skills, and opportunities to live a healthy life.

Priority 4

People with the greatest need are helped to live in a place they call home.



What we have achieved

We engage with the community in discussions around the climate emergency. We empower them to take action and support our collective aspiration to become a carbon neutral borough.

We continue to deliver the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) which aims to reduce carbon dioxide across nine priority areas. It includes recommendations from residents, businesses, local organisations, schools and other stakeholders.

As a result of the Waste Transformation Programme, recycling has increased. The Council is now one of the highest performing nationally and we are striving to reach the target of 70% recycling by 2030.

The borough benefits from large areas of accessible green space. We are committed to improving the biodiversity value and accessibility of these existing sites and, through our newly submitted Local Plan, we will ensure that the new communities will also benefit from large areas of new high quality accessible green spaces.

Some examples

- ✓ We completed the first phase of the Gorse Ride social housing regeneration project. The new homes have been designed with high levels of insulation and low carbon technology.
- ✓ Wokingham had the highest take up in Berkshire of solar panels through the Solar Together scheme, with 450 properties installing solar panels through this scheme.
- ✓ We adopted the Electric Vehicle Charging strategy in January 2025 with 94 charging points installed.
- ✓ We planted 45,906 trees or hedgerows over 17 hectares since 2021.
- ✓ We reduced our CO₂ emissions by 1,476 tonnes.
- ✓ Wokingham has been recognised as a "Tree City of the World", having met five core standards that illustrate a commitment to caring for its trees and forests.
- ✓ We secured planning and grid connection for Barkham solar farm which is due to join the main grid in Summer 2026.
- ✓ We submitted the new Local Plan, which includes key Climate Emergency policies around minimum energy standards in future developments.

Where we are going

Priority 1

We will enable people to share the benefits of improved biodiversity and safe, accessible green spaces.

Priority 2

Residents can enjoy clean and well-maintained streets and other public areas which in turn continues to foster a sense of pride in our local areas.

Priority 3

Continue to deliver the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) with the goal of seeing communities with lowered emissions from transport, homes, and businesses and improved recycling.

Priority 4

Continue to focus on improved energy efficiency which residents can benefit from in their homes, making them warmer and healthier to live in and reducing bills.



What we have achieved

Wokingham is one of the safest boroughs in the country. The Community Safety Partnership is committed to working with partners to ensure that people are safe and feel safe in the borough.

We have taken a stand to end violence against women by becoming a White Ribbon accredited organisation. We have also recently updated The Domestic Abuse Strategy which has been co-produced with those with lived experience as well as agencies responding to those affected by domestic abuse.

Prevention projects such as Positive Choices have been introduced. This uses virtual reality headsets to help educate young people on topics including knife crime, violence against women and girls, exploitation, county drugs lines and sexual harassment.

Some examples

- ✓ We have invested in tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) with the team now working directly for WBC.
- ✓ We are working across Children's Services, Thames Valley Police and the Community Safety Partnership to reduce the exploitation of vulnerable young people.
- ✓ We have reduced the number of first-time entrants into the youth justice system by development of an early intervention and prevention approach.
- ✓ We have provided local homes for children, young people and young adults in their local communities so they can live and be educated in their community.
- ✓ We have introduced an Exclusion Prevention Programme in schools which focuses on keeping children in education.
- ✓ Our future youth focus survey received over 2000 responses from 11-18-year-olds telling us what makes them feel safe.
- ✓ We have built 36 housing units as part of our award-winning specialist accommodation programme, with another 25 units in train.

Where we are going

Priority 1

We are focused on protecting residents from abuse, exploitation, and neglect.

Priority 2

People feel safe in their community, including those who have experienced anti-social behaviour, discrimination, or hate crime.

Priority 3

We have supportive communities and partnerships, where helping early is everyone's business.

Priority 4

Housing, neighbourhoods, and public areas are designed, built, and maintained with people's safety at the forefront.





What we have achieved

Following the development of the Communities Vision we are now working together to grow community power. This has transformed our relationship with the community and voluntary sector and changed the way we do things.

We design spaces that focus on people, not just buildings, so everyone feels connected to what they need.

We teamed up with our Town and Parish Councils who are helping to fund bus routes across the borough.

The Community Lottery will help make our community more connected and supportive. The money from the lottery will go to local good causes and projects that help everyone.

The Berkshire Prosperity Board makes sure we are connected economically and has a shared vision for a better future.

Digital inclusion is a priority as it helps people stay connected with family and friends, join online communities, access services, and share ideas, reducing feelings of loneliness.

Some examples

- ✓ We worked with residents so that our vision for Social Care and our Communities Vision echo the voices of local people.
- ✓ We are transforming our town centres through our Town Centres Strategy.
- ✓ We built 20 miles of new paths for walking and cycling so people can travel safely.
- ✓ We connected more places by building four major roads, four community centres, and two leisure centres.
- ✓ We created a fantastic hub in Wokingham town centre to bring charities and community groups together under one roof.
- ✓ We invested in new homes, providing 46 new beds for children leaving care so they can stay close to their communities.
- ✓ We extended free bus travel for disabled people, so they can use their bus passes whenever they need to.
- ✓ We provided Independent Travel Training for children and young people to enable them to access education, employment and training and promote independence.
- ✓ We have digital skills sessions at our libraries and community buildings to help people learn how to use technology.

Where we are going

Priority 1

We will achieve better outcomes for residents because we work with partners and residents to shape and improve services together, including through the use of new technologies.

Priority 2

We will work to give people the opportunity to live in communities where we feel we belong and have strong social connections.

Priority 3

We will help all our town centres, businesses and neighbourhoods in the borough to thrive.

Priority 4

We ensure people can get to where they need to through good transport links, including an effective road network, and public and active travel options.



Appendix 1

Our Engagement Journey - how this plan was written

The voices of around 5,000 people helped shape the Council Plan. Consultations and research provided insights into residents' experiences, views and ambitions.

We had over **1,200** direct interactions, including:

 **442** online survey responses

 Over **200** residents spoke directly to us across the borough

 **40+** organisations through partnership meetings

 Over **500** pieces of feedback from our workforce

Aim	Stage	When	Who and how					How it shaped the plan
Draft Themes	Early soundings	Autumn 2023 - Spring 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Recent Wokingham Borough Council and Communities Vision consultations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Partnership meetings: Tenants and Landlord Involvement Panel, Voluntary Sector Action Group, Head Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Health and Wellbeing Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Workforce: all-employee meetings		<ul style="list-style-type: none">We referred to the Communities Vision ambitions to inform our Council Plan from the outset.We tested five initial themes of Fair, Safe, Green, Thriving and Connected and what they might cover. Your feedback gave broad support to all five. 'Thriving' was seen as very important but overlapping other themes. We made our central mission "everyone has the opportunity to thrive".We asked what was most important to you, and what the Council should focus on. We used your feedback to draft some priorities under each theme, and continued to test and refine them as we heard more views.You wanted the Council Plan to be people-focussed, short and clear, and show how the plan would be delivered.
Test Themes	Informal engagement	Spring - Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Colleague conference Directors and leads on key strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Councillors: Overview and Scrutiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Public Survey on Engage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Workforce: survey and focus groups		
Draft Priorities	Gathering more views	Autumn 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Speaking to residents at shopping centres and libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Postcards in Citizens' Advice offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Session with members of Caring Listening And Supporting Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Councillors: Exec membersDirectors: workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Further data and insights from Inequalities project and Youth Future Focus Survey	
Test Mission and Priorities	Formal consultation	Early 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Public Survey on Engage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Direct email to Town and Parish Councils, and key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Workforce survey and drop-ins	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Speaking to residents at Carnival Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Councillors: Overview and Scrutiny	

Appendix 2

Reducing inequalities

We all want Wokingham Borough to be a place where everyone can thrive. This is an aim of the Communities Vision 2035 and the mission of this new council plan. But right now, not everyone has the same chance to do so.

Our ability to thrive depends on many things, including where we live, our homes, jobs and communities. These are building blocks of our health and wellbeing. Many people in our borough have these blocks firmly in place. They have what they need to thrive and be healthy, including safe homes, good jobs and supportive communities. But this is not the case for everyone, and when we don't have these things, and are constantly worrying about making ends meet, it puts a strain on our mental and physical health. This leads to differences in people's health and wellbeing that are unfair and avoidable.

This council plan aims to strengthen these building blocks for everyone, so that all our residents have the opportunity to live healthier lives and thrive.

To help achieve this, Wokingham Borough Council is working with the Institute of Health Equity at University College London, and with partners and communities across our borough, to reduce the unfair and avoidable differences in people's health and their chances to thrive by using the 'Marmot approach'. This approach has been developed over many years by Professor Sir Michael Marmot and his team at the Institute of Health Equity. It is being used by many places across the UK to build healthier and fairer communities.



Source: www.health.org.uk

