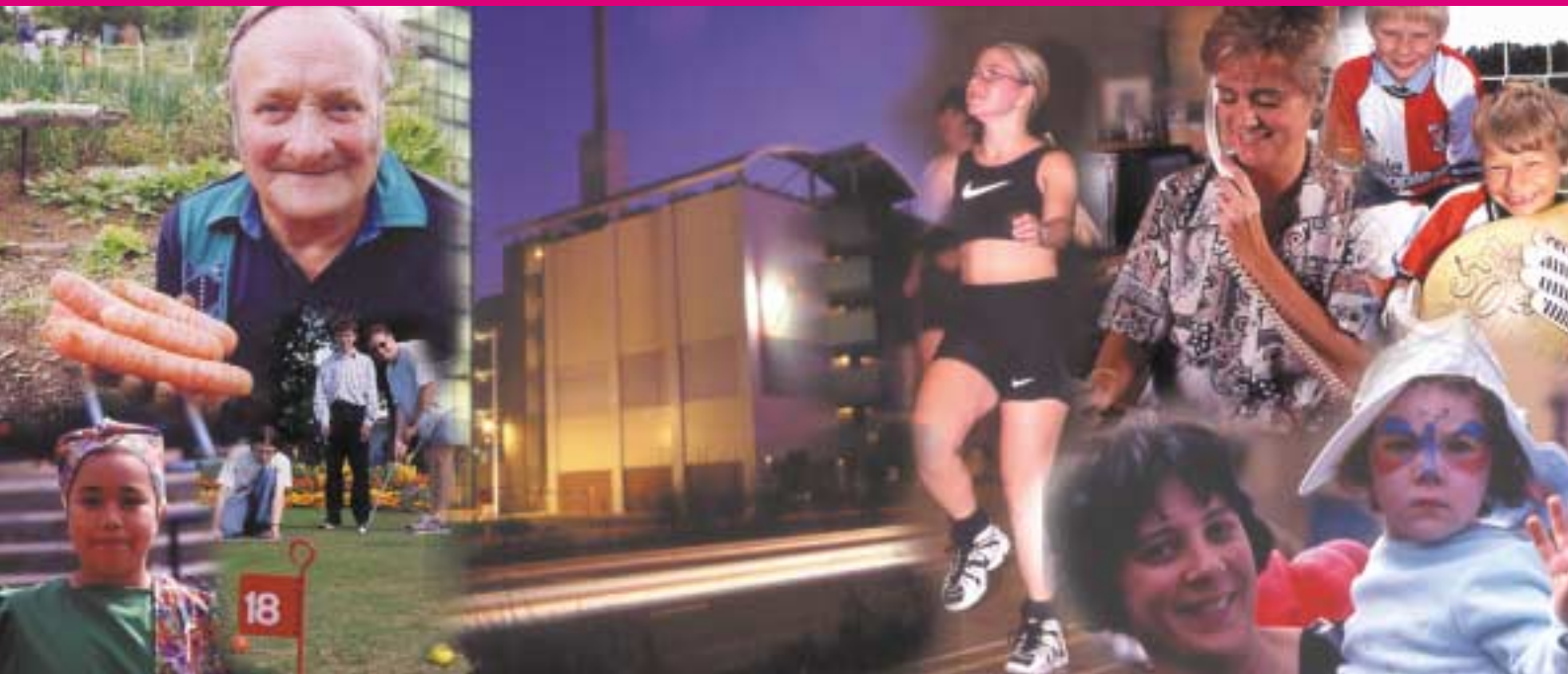


Service and Performance Plan  
including Council Tax and Business Rates  
2003/04  
for Woking Borough



Working  
for Woking



Best Value ✓



# Inside...

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A transcript of this document can be provided for partially sighted people, either in large print or on tape. Please contact the number below if you require further information.

(01483) 755855 (0900 - 1700)

(01483) 757909 (1700 - 0900)

If you require a translation, please contact:

Se avete bisogno di una traduzione si prega contattare:

Si usted requiere una traducción de esta información por favor contacte a:

اگر آپ کو اس کے ترجمے کی ضرورت ہو تو آپ ہم سے رجوع فرمائیں۔

আপনার যদি এই পত্রের অনুবাদের দরকার হয়,  
তাহলে দয়া করে যোগাযোগ করুন :

01483 750548



# Welcome....

...to Woking Borough  
Council's annual summary  
Service and Performance  
(Best Value) Plan, which is  
being sent to all residents  
and businesses in the  
Borough.

## WHAT IS THE PLAN FOR?

The aim of the Plan is to:

- provide clear information about the Council's performance and our plans for continuous improvement in the quality and value of services
- explain how you can have your say in those plans
- keep you informed of how the Council is managing the Borough's operations.

The middle section of this Plan provides information about the Council's budgets for 2003/2004 and how your Council Tax has been calculated.

This Service and Performance Plan 2003/2004 is published by:

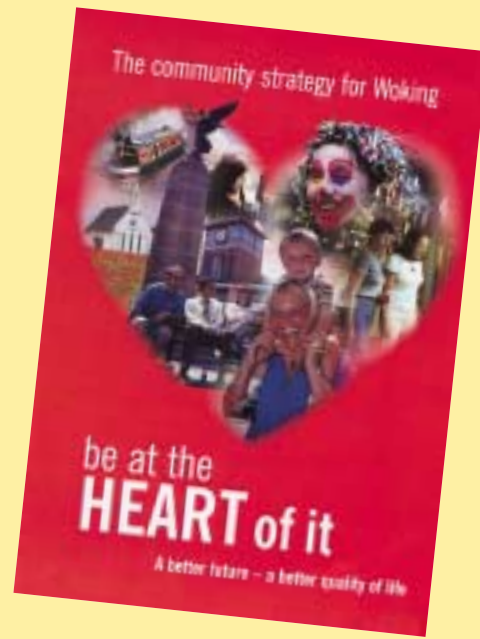
Woking Borough Council  
Civic Offices  
Gloucester Square  
Woking GU21 6YL  
email:wokbc@woking.gov.uk  
Web site:www.woking.gov.uk

*If you have any comments or questions please see the back cover for contact names and numbers.*

# About Woking Borough Council

“Woking Borough Council is an organisation that gets things done, where innovation and creativity are encouraged and it has many achievements of which it can be proud. For example, innovation has been recognised by the Queen’s Award for Enterprise for its work on energy services, a unique award for a local authority.”

*Improvement & Development Agency Review - November 2001*



## The Council

Woking Borough Council comprises 36 Councillors representing 17 Wards. The Council operates the Leader and Executive constitutional model and the current Leader of the Executive is Councillor Jim Armitage.

Elections are held annually for one third of the seats and the next Borough Council elections will take place on 1 May 2003.

The Council is supported by a Management Team comprising the Chief Executive, Paul Russell and Executive Directors, Ray Morgan and Douglas Spinks and a team of nine Service Heads, who are listed on the back cover.



## Community Strategy

The Community Strategy for Woking was published in July last year, following extensive community consultation. The community aims for Woking are:

- 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 decent 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

The Community Strategy provides a focus for the Council’s plans and actions and those of partner organisations and the voluntary and business sector, through the Local Strategic Partnership.

Within the framework of the Strategy, the Council’s top priorities are housing, the environment and the contribution that leisure makes to health and well-being.



# Listening to You

Each year we carry out a range of consultations to establish what you think about what we do and how you want us to provide services. The results of these consultations help us to plan for the future and understand how we can improve.

Consultation takes place through a variety of mechanisms as follows:

- Our Citizens' Panel has 1,400 members who are consulted on average 4 to 6 times per year on a range of issues.
- Our roadshow vehicle is used at venues throughout the Borough to seek residents' views.
- Face to face interviews and focus groups are arranged with stakeholders to inform the work we do as part of our Best Value Reviews.
- This year we established our first Youth Council which will better inform us in our decision making processes and help to engage young people in the community.
- We regularly consult groups of service users such as tenants, Leisure Centre customers, Car Parks users, Planning and Benefit applicants.

Many of the results of consultations that have taken place this year are set out in the following pages but here are some headline results:

- 84% of respondents were satisfied with their area as a place to live.
- In response to Surrey County Council's proposals to build 2,000 homes on the Green Belt, a greater number of you thought we should instead build more homes in the existing built up areas.
- 80% of respondents agreed with our decision to support the building of a community, arts and heritage centre in the town centre.
- The majority of members of the Panel supported civic and twinning activities.
- Our Best Value Reviews tested your satisfaction with car parking arrangements, grounds maintenance, planning, building control and environmental health. Satisfaction levels in excess of 75% were recorded for all these services.



## Planned Consultation

Looking forward to the coming year, we will be carrying out our three yearly satisfaction surveys on what you think of our services generally. The surveys will be sent to the Citizens' Panel and a random selection of households throughout the Borough. We will then be able to compare the responses with the results of similar surveys we carried out for the first time in 2000/01.

If you would like to find out more information about joining Woking's Citizens' Panel please contact Corri Clarke or David Johnson as follows:

In writing to:  
Policy and Performance,  
Woking Borough Council,  
Civic Offices, Gloucester Square,  
WOKING, GU21 6YL  
By phone:  
01483 743441 or 743060

Email:  
[policy@woking.gov.uk](mailto:policy@woking.gov.uk)



# Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Best Value

## Comprehensive Performance Assessment

Over the next two years, all District Councils will be subject to a new external scrutiny process by the Government appointed Audit Commission. The process which is called Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), has already taken place for County Councils, London and Metropolitan Boroughs and Unitary Authorities and is intended to assess how well a Council is run, how good its services are and whether they will improve.

The performance measurements set out in this document, together with the outcomes of Best Value Reviews, will all feed into the CPA process. For District Councils like Woking, it is intended to look at:

- How the Council manages its business overall;
- The work we are doing to try and balance the housing markets and to ensure a decent standard of Council owned accommodation;

- The contribution we make to managing the physical environment of the Borough

An overall judgement will be made as to whether we are an excellent, good, fair, weak or poor council and how likely we are to improve. Our assessment is due to take place in December 2003 and the Audit Commission will publish its report on the outcome next year.

Best Value means achieving continuous improvement in quality and cost across all council services. This will be done by carrying out fundamental reviews, which will:

- Challenge why and how a service is being provided
- Compare our performance with that of other councils and providers
- Consult local taxpayers, service users and the business community about our performance and improvement targets
- Consider competition as a means of securing efficient and effective services

We continually look at the ways we can deliver and improve services, and how we can be closer and more accountable to our residents through:

- Improving local democracy
- Improving local financial accountability
- Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct throughout the authority
- Promoting the well-being of communities
- Increasing the electronic delivery of services

## Best Value Reviews

Reviews of services or functions are carried out by a team, including Councillors, officers and, often, people from outside the Council and include a significant level of consultation with users and other stakeholders and comparison with best practice. All reviews will result in an improvement plan and some

are externally inspected by the Audit Commission.

Good progress is being made in improving services and work continues to implement improvements from earlier reviews, for example integrating environmental maintenance and

improving access to leisure provision. Some of the key outcomes from last year's reviews are shown overleaf. Future reviews include looking at the way we work with voluntary organisations and improving independence for older people.

# Best Value Reviews

In 2002/03 we completed 6 Best Value Reviews. At the end of each review we report on the findings and produce a detailed action plan setting out what we need to do to ensure that we continuously improve our

services. This is a summary of what you told us when we consulted you on your views together with just some of the key improvements arising from each review:

| Review   | Results of Consultation  | Key Improvements Planned   |
|--|--|--|
| Housing including the Housing Strategy, the provision of housing advice and the allocation of accommodation, repairs, management and maintenance of Council owned accommodation and tenant involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear and comprehensive strategy</li> <li>• Friendly helpful staff</li> <li>• More clarity needed about the Council's strategic priorities</li> <li>• Wider involvement required in the formulation of the Housing Strategy</li> <li>• Processes are complex</li> <li>• High level of satisfaction by tenants</li> <li>• Good quality accommodation</li> <li>• Dissatisfaction with grounds maintenance</li> <li>• Opportunities for tenant involvement achieved high satisfaction levels</li> <li>• Inconsistent quality of repairs</li> <li>• More feedback after consultation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on clear local priorities with monitoring and targets based on better research and information</li> <li>• Extend consultation to a wider audience</li> <li>• Create more effective partnership working to develop new opportunities for housing</li> <li>• Restructure the service to enable better links with corporate strategy and improve responsiveness to customers</li> <li>• Improve arrangements for repairs and maintenance e.g. appointments, post-inspection, monitoring satisfaction</li> <li>• Increase opportunities for customer contact, tenant involvement, consultation and feedback</li> <li>• Provision of better information and access to services using, for example, electronic methods and simplified procedures</li> </ul> |
| Grounds Maintenance including the care of green areas such as parks, common land and other public spaces   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good satisfaction levels overall</li> <li>• The level of expenditure on maintenance was endorsed</li> <li>• Dissatisfaction with Council owned housing land, closed burial grounds and litter in the town centre</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve efficiency, monitoring and responsiveness of the service by combining the grounds maintenance and street cleansing contracts into a single contract</li> <li>• Implementing the new environmental maintenance contract with SERCO from 1 April 2003</li> </ul>  |
| Building Control & Environmental Health including licensing, pest control, food and health and safety  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of respondents made very positive remarks about the services</li> <li>• High quality of services provided</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced information on website and development of electronic 'Submit a Plan' to Building Control</li> <li>• Extend opening hours for pre-application advice</li> <li>• Enhance quality of taxi and private hire services</li> </ul>  |
| Planning and Development Control including tree preservation orders, planning applications and planning policy   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Favourable comments &amp; satisfaction</li> <li>• Helpful staff but limited office accommodation to view plans</li> <li>• Applications dealt with in good time</li> <li>• Opportunity to speak at planning meetings is valued</li> <li>• Little awareness of extended opening times</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration of IT use to improve access to the service e.g. electronic tracking of applications</li> <li>• Extend neighbour notification of minor planning applications</li> <li>• Reduce the number of objections required to permit public participation at Planning Committee meetings</li> <li>• Increase checking and enforcement of planning conditions</li> </ul>  |
| Civic Events including Twinning and Civic Awards   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Much support for civic events</li> <li>• Limited publicity and information</li> <li>• Not always inclusive of everyone</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved access to information about activities</li> <li>• Enhanced opportunities for participation and inclusivity.</li> </ul>   |
| Legal Services including the legal advice and services which support the Council's activities  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good levels of satisfaction overall</li> <li>• Clients want better understanding of processes</li> <li>• Comments about timescales for leases and land sales</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate efficiencies through enhanced use of IT</li> <li>• Provision of information about procedures and use of plain English</li> <li>• Implementation of progress reporting mechanisms for clients.</li> </ul>  |

# Council Tax and Business Rates

*This section should be read in conjunction with your Council Tax and/or Business Rates bill*

## THE COUNCIL TAX AND SERVICES FOR WOKING BOROUGH

The Council Tax is a local tax set by local councils to help pay for local services.

The amount you pay is based upon the property band into which your home falls and the level of tax set for each band. Generally, you pay more the higher the capital value of your home. The value of your home has been assessed by the Valuation Office Agency (part of the Inland Revenue), not by the Council, and is based on its estimated sale price on 1 April 1991. Your home was valued to establish its relative value compared with other homes and any changes in property values, either up or down, since then cannot be taken into account.

The relationship between the amounts for each band has been set by the Government and the basic rate is fixed at Band D's level that, for Woking, in 2003/2004 is £1,145.70.

If you live in a Band A property you

pay two thirds of the basic rate and if you live in a Band H property you pay twice the basic rate. Your Council Tax bill shows which band applies to your home and the table below sets out the amounts due for 2003/2004.

You are entitled to a discount if you live alone and other reductions, such as those for people on low incomes, may be available. Details of these are given on pages 9 and 10.

## EMPLOYEES

The Council has budgeted for 475 employees (full-time equivalents) in 2003/2004 compared with 487 in 2002/2003.

## BYFLEET PARISH COUNCIL

Woking will also collect £55,000 in 2003/2004 on behalf of Byfleet Parish Council. The Parish Council is committed to providing high standards of service and increasing their responsibilities in the village and will be aiming to be more self

sufficient by winning further contracts.

Woking Borough Council is responsible for collecting the Council Tax that, this financial year, will total £44 million. Of this £33 million will go to Surrey County Council, £5 million to Surrey Police with the Borough retaining £6 million. £55,000 goes to Byfleet Parish Council.

## OUTSTANDING DEBT

At 31st March 2002, the Council had net investments of £3 million and no long term borrowing outstanding.

## ASSETS

The Council's assets at 31st March 2002 were £280 million.

## HOW MUCH IS IT AND HOW MUCH HAS IT CHANGED? - COUNCIL TAX FOR 2003/2004

| Property Values (1 April 1991)       | Band | Surrey County Council | Surrey Police | Woking Borough Council | Total Council Tax | Extra for Byfleet Parish |
|--------------------------------------|------|-----------------------|---------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| £40,000 or less                      | A    | 567.66                | 90.06         | 106.08                 | 763.80            | 13.04                    |
| £40,001 to £52,000                   | B    | 662.27                | 105.07        | 123.76                 | 891.10            | 15.21                    |
| £52,001 to £68,000                   | C    | 756.88                | 120.08        | 141.44                 | 1,018.40          | 17.39                    |
| £68,001 to £88,000                   | D    | 851.49                | 135.09        | 159.12                 | 1,145.70          | 19.56                    |
| £88,001 to £120,000                  | E    | 1,040.71              | 165.11        | 194.48                 | 1,400.30          | 23.91                    |
| £120,001 to £160,000                 | F    | 1,229.93              | 195.13        | 229.84                 | 1,654.90          | 28.25                    |
| £160,001 to £320,000                 | G    | 1,419.15              | 225.15        | 265.20                 | 1,909.50          | 32.60                    |
| £320,001 or more                     | H    | 1,702.98              | 270.18        | 318.24                 | 2,291.40          | 39.12                    |
| Percentage change from previous year |      | 17.9%                 | 40.1%         | 5.3%                   | 18.2%             | 22.0%                    |

# THE COST OF SERVICES

| 2002/2003        |                           |                 |             |                                   | 2003/2004        |                           |                 |             |
|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Expend-<br>iture | Govern-<br>ment<br>Grants | Other<br>Income | Net<br>Cost |                                   | Expend-<br>iture | Govern-<br>ment<br>Grants | Other<br>Income | Net<br>Cost |
| £'000            | £'000                     | £'000           | £'000       |                                   | £'000            | £'000                     | £'000           | £'000       |
| 6,418            | 0                         | 5,178           | 1,240       | Highways                          | 5,024            | 0                         | 5,024           | 0           |
| 5,297            | 0                         | 4,140           | 1,157       | Planning & Economic Development   | 4,370            | 24                        | 4,259           | 87          |
| 7,100            | 0                         | 2,972           | 4,128       | Recreation and Tourism            | 7,859            | 0                         | 2,999           | 4,860       |
| 1,045            | 22                        | 153             | 870         | Environmental Health              | 954              | 24                        | 169             | 761         |
| 1,624            | 0                         | 179             | 1,445       | Refuse Collection                 | 1,671            | 0                         | 172             | 1,499       |
| 17,388           | 3,138                     | 13,542          | 708         | Housing                           | 18,023           | 2,570                     | 14,371          | 1,082       |
| 7,671            | 6,653                     | 0               | 1,018       | Benefits                          | 8,298            | 7,335                     | 0               | 963         |
| 2,388            | 0                         | 711             | 1,677       | Community Care                    | 3,260            | 0                         | 1,623           | 1,637       |
| 6,711            | 167                       | 1,610           | 4,934       | Other Services                    | 7,862            | 150                       | 1,768           | 5,944       |
| 0                | 0                         | 5,707           | -5,707      | Interest and other Surpluses      | 0                | 0                         | 3,687           | -3,687      |
| 578              | 0                         | 0               | 578         | Movement in Reserves              | 0                | 0                         | 916             | -916        |
| 99               | 0                         | 0               | 99          | Management of Change              | 362              | 0                         | 0               | 362         |
| -296             | 0                         | 0               | -296        | Budget Reductions                 | -366             | 0                         | 0               | -366        |
| 56,023           | 9,980                     | 34,192          | 11,851      | Total Budget Requirement          | 57,317           | 10,103                    | 34,988          | 12,226      |
| 0                | 0                         | 3,943           | -3,943      | Less Business Rates Receivable    | 0                | 0                         | 3,136           | -3,136      |
| 0                | 2,039                     | 0               | -2,039      | Less Revenue Support Grant        | 0                | 2,909                     | 0               | -2,909      |
| 0                | 0                         | 78              | -78         | Less Council Tax Surplus          | 0                | 0                         | 55              | -55         |
| 56,023           | 12,019                    | 38,213          | 5,791       | Amount to be met from Council Tax | 57,317           | 13,012                    | 38,179          | 6,126       |

This is the equivalent of the following amounts per head of Woking's population:

|                                   | Total<br>Net Cost<br>£'000 | Net Cost<br>Per Head<br>£ |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Total Budget Requirement          | 12,226                     | 136                       |
| Business Rates Receivable         | -3,136                     | -35                       |
| Revenue Support Grant             | -2,909                     | -32                       |
| Council Tax Surplus               | -55                        | -1                        |
| Amount to be met from Council Tax | 6,126                      | 68                        |

Why the cost of Woking's services has increased:

|   | £'000  |
|---|--------|
| Budget Requirement 2002/2003                  | 11,851 |
| Inflation                                     | +884   |
| Unavoidable additional service costs          | +314   |
| Increased interest receipt                    | -176   |
| Increased fees, charges, and commercial rents | -347   |
| Cost reductions                               | -300   |
| Budget requirement 2003/2004                  | 12,226 |

## COUNCIL TAX, BENEFIT AND BUSINESS RATES ENQUIRIES

If you have any queries or problems do not hesitate to contact us by:

- telephoning the Civic Offices on 01483 755855, or
- writing to the Council Tax, Benefits or Rates Section (as appropriate) at Woking Borough Council, Civic Offices, Gloucester Square, Woking GU21 6YL, or
- sending an e-mail to [ctax@woking.gov.uk](mailto:ctax@woking.gov.uk), [benefits@woking.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@woking.gov.uk) or [brates@woking.gov.uk](mailto:brates@woking.gov.uk) (as appropriate).

If possible please quote the account number shown on your Council Tax or Business Rates bill with any communication.

Further information can be found on the Council Tax and Business Rate pages on the Council's website: [www.woking.gov.uk](http://www.woking.gov.uk)

Information, including contact details on the Surrey County Council and Surrey Police charges can be found on their leaflets enclosed with your bill.

# COUNCIL TAX

## EXEMPTIONS

Some dwellings are exempt, including vacant properties which:

- are unfurnished (exempt for up to six months)
- are owned by a charity (exempt for up to six months)
- are uninhabitable and require or are undergoing major repair works or structural alteration (exempt for up to six months after the repairs/alterations are completed or a maximum of twelve months from the date they became necessary)
- are left empty by someone who has gone to live in a hospital, nursing or residential care home
- are left empty by someone who has gone to live elsewhere (not a hospital or care home) to receive care because of old age, disablement, illness, drug or alcohol dependency or mental disorder
- are left empty by someone who has gone into prison or other place of detention, e.g. hospital under Mental Health Acts
- are left empty by someone who has moved in order to provide personal care for another person
- are waiting for probate or letters of administration to be granted (and for up to six months after)
- have been repossessed
- are the responsibility of a bankrupt's trustee
- are empty because their occupation is forbidden by law
- are waiting to be occupied by a minister of religion
- were last occupied by a student who was the owner
- are caravan pitches or boat moorings
- are separately banded dwellings which form part of another property or are situated within the curtilage of another property and are difficult to let separately e.g. an annexe which could not be let

separately without a breach of Town & Country Planning Act 1990.

Other exempt properties which are not vacant

- Forces barracks and married quarters (contributions to the cost of local services are received through a special arrangement)
- Student occupied households and those which include, spouses or dependants of overseas students who are not British citizens and unable to work or claim benefit
- Properties occupied solely by people under 18 years of age
- Dwellings occupied only by a person or persons who are severely mentally impaired
- Certain dwellings occupied by diplomats
- Annexes occupied by someone who is related to the residents living in the rest of the property and is 65 or over, or severely mentally impaired or permanently disabled.

*If you think your property may be exempt you should contact the Council Tax Section stating which exemption you are claiming. If we require further information to verify the exemption we will write to you.*

## DISCOUNTS

The full Council Tax assumes that there are two or more adults living in a dwelling. If only one adult lives in a dwelling (as their main home), the Council Tax bill will be reduced by a quarter (25%). If a dwelling is no one's main home, the bill will be reduced by a half (50%). This can apply to empty dwellings and second homes.

Certain people will not be counted (i.e. are disregarded) when looking at the number of adults resident in a dwelling if they meet certain conditions:

- full-time students, student nurses, apprentices and Youth Training trainees

- patients resident in hospital
- people who are being looked after in care homes
- people who are severely mentally impaired
- people staying in certain hostels or night shelters
- 18 and 19 year olds who are at, or who have just left, school
- careworkers working for low pay, usually for charities
- carers for someone with a disability who is not a spouse, partner or child under 18
- members of visiting forces and certain international institutions
- members of religious communities (monks and nuns)
- people in prison (except those in prison for non-payment of Council Tax or a fine)

If your bill indicates that a discount has been allowed, you must tell the Council of any change of circumstances that affect your entitlement. If you fail to do so you may be required to pay a penalty.

The bill will show you if you have been granted a discount and the types are listed below.

Single person - 25% discount because there is only one adult resident who is counted;

Single with disregards - 25% discount because there is more than one adult resident but only one is counted;

Empty discount - 50% discount because there are no adult residents;

Disregards only - 50% discount because all the adult residents are not counted;

Single who is disregarded - 50% discount because there is one adult resident who is not counted.

People with Disabilities - If you, or someone who lives with you, have a room, or an extra bathroom or kitchen, or sufficient space to permit the use of a wheelchair in your property, to meet special needs arising from a disability, you may be entitled to a reduction on your Council Tax bill. The bill will be

reduced to that of a property in the band immediately below the band shown on the valuation list or by one ninth in the case of band A properties. These reductions ensure that disabled people do not pay more tax on account of space needed because of a disability.

*If you think you may be entitled to a discount or disabled reduction and it is not already shown on the bill, you should contact the Council Tax Section stating which discount you are claiming. We will then send you the appropriate application form.*

---

## BENEFIT

You may receive up to 100% help towards your Council Tax through the benefit scheme if you are in receipt of income support or you are on a low income. Certain other factors will be taken into account, such as any non-dependants living with you, and these will reduce the amount of benefit.

*If you do not already receive benefit and you think you may qualify, further details and an application form can be obtained from the Benefit Section.*

---

## APPEALS

### To the Council

You may appeal if you consider that you are not liable to pay Council Tax, for example, because you are not the resident or owner, or because your property is exempt, or you feel that we have made a mistake in calculating your bill. If you wish to appeal on these grounds you must first write to the Council Tax Section giving details of your appeal and we will reconsider your case. Making an appeal does not allow you to withhold payment of tax owing in the meantime. If your appeal is successful you will be entitled to a refund of any overpaid tax.

### To the Valuation Office Agency

If you wish to appeal against the banding of your property, you should write to the:

Listing Officer, Valuation Office Agency, West Block, Westbrook Mills, Borough Road, Godalming, Surrey GU7 2SG

Tel no. 01483 702900

The grounds for appeal about banding are restricted to the following cases:

- where you believe that the banding should be changed because there has been a material increase or material reduction (this is explained below) in the dwelling's value;
- where you start or stop using part of your dwelling to carry out a business, or the balance between domestic and business use changes;
- where the Listing Officer has altered a list without a proposal having been made by a taxpayer;
- where you become the taxpayer in respect of a dwelling for the first time. (Your appeal must be made within 6 months, but if the same appeal has already been considered and determined by a Valuation Tribunal, it cannot be made again).

A material increase in value may result from building, engineering or other work carried out on the dwelling. In these cases revaluation does not take place until after a sale - so the person appealing would usually be the new owner or resident. A material reduction in value may result from the demolition of any part of the dwelling, any change in the physical state of the local area or an adaptation to make the dwelling suitable for use by someone with a physical disability. In these cases revaluation should take place as soon as possible. Making an appeal does not allow you to withhold payment of tax owing in the meantime. If your appeal is successful you will be entitled to a refund of any overpaid tax.

For further information on appeals and bandings, visit The Valuation Office website: [www.voa.gov.uk](http://www.voa.gov.uk)

## BUSINESS (NON-DOMESTIC) RATES

This Council is responsible for collecting rates on all business properties in the Borough on behalf

of Central Government. All monies collected are paid into a central pool and in return a grant is received towards the provision of local services. In 2003/2004 the total rates due from businesses in the Borough is £36 million and the grant received will be £3.1 million.

Broadly, the amount you pay is calculated by multiplying the rateable value of your property by the multiplier or "poundage" set by the Government each year, which for 2003/2004 is 44.4p. However, this amount may be changed by any transitional or other relief to which you may be entitled and where applicable, these are shown on your bill.

Please see separate explanatory notes enclosed with your bill for further information.

All rateable values are assessed by the Valuation Office Agency. If you have any questions on such matters you should contact

The Valuation Officer, Valuation Office Agency, West Block, Westbrook Mills, Borough Road, Godalming, Surrey GU7 2SG  
Tel. no. 01483 702900

For further information visit their website: [www.voa.gov.uk](http://www.voa.gov.uk)

In exceptional circumstances business premises that are partly unoccupied for a temporary period may be entitled to some relief from rates based on the unoccupied part e.g. due to trying to let the empty part (but not keeping part of the premises empty through choice) or because structural alterations are being carried out (but not redecoration etc.).

The Council will consider applications for hardship relief for local business ratepayers, if they comply with special conditions laid down by the Government.

*Should you require an application form or further information on any reliefs please contact The Rates Section.*

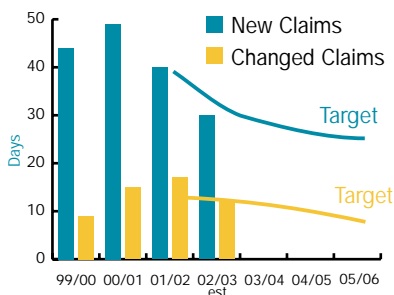
# Best Use of Resources



We have a duty to our residents to ensure that the Council's financial affairs are properly managed by keeping tight control of public expenditure and making the best use of our resources.

As well as direct services to claimants of Housing and Council Tax Benefits and the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates we undertake a range of functions which support the work of the Council including the provision of Information Communication Technology, Human Resources and Financial Management.

## Time to process benefits claims



We also aim to process 75% of renewal claims on time

Last year we paid Housing and Council Tax Benefit to some 5,000 claimants

## HUMAN RESOURCES

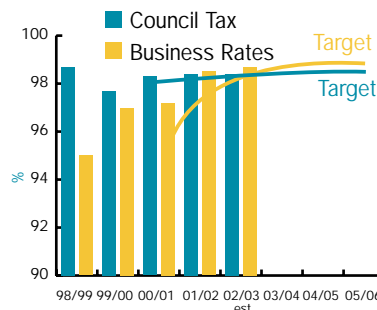
We employ nearly 500 staff making us one of the Borough's largest employers.

We are committed to equality and in 2002 we adopted a new policy on equality and diversity, including a Race Equality Scheme which is now being implemented.

We monitor how we are doing in the recruitment of staff by sex, ethnic origin and disability:

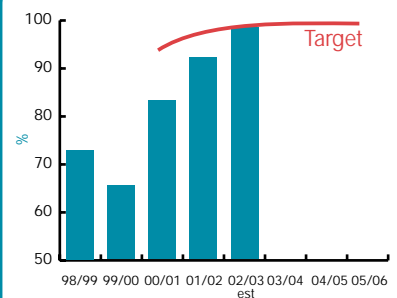
|  |      |
|--|------|
| % of women in the top 5% of earners                    | 22%  |
| % of staff from ethnic minorities in top 5% of earners | 0%   |
| % of staff from ethnic community                       | 4%   |
| % of staff with a disability                           | 2.6% |

## Percentage of Council Tax collected



We collect Council Tax from over 37,500 properties and Business Rates from 2,500 businesses.

## Invoices paid in 30 days



In 2001/02 we processed over 43,000 items for payment

## Electronic Delivery of Services

We are aiming to ensure that all our services are capable of being delivered electronically by 2005. In September our assessment showed that we had met 35% of this target.

The average number of days of sickness per employee reduced from 9.1 in 2001/02 to 8\* in 2002/03 which is in the lowest 25% of all English Councils.

\* Estimated figure for 2002/03



# Decent and Affordable Housing

Access to good quality housing at affordable prices for local people and key workers is one of the key issues identified by residents in Woking and is a priority in the Community Strategy for Woking.

We aim to secure and maintain good quality homes and ensure the effective use of resources to meet the broad range of housing related needs in the Borough. As well as the work we do to manage the Council's own housing stock, our Housing Strategy sets out how we aim to improve the availability of suitable homes through a range of activities and initiatives.

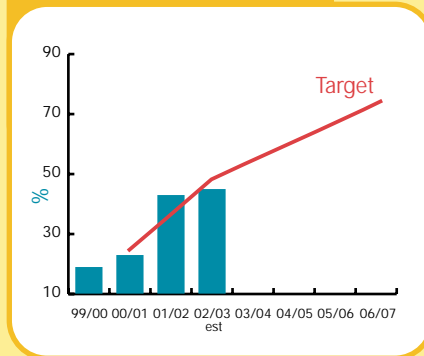
## Good news!

2002/03 saw a successful bid by the Council for Government funds to reduce the length of stay in bed and breakfast by developing housing opportunities in the Private Sector.

## Did you know?

The Council seeks to get affordable homes in all major housing schemes and seeks to increase these levels in the future.

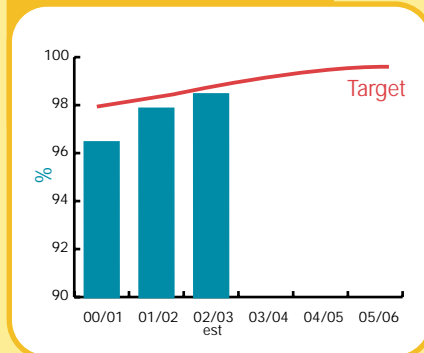
Appointments for repairs made and kept



Approximately 14,000 routine repairs are carried out in our properties each year. We aim to increase the number of appointments for repairs to 90% over the next 5 years.

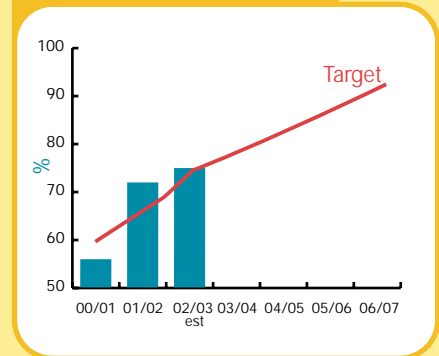
In 2002/03 our Council owned homes were in the top ten of local authorities for energy efficiency.

Rent collected as percentage of rent due



We now have rent officers dedicated to each area of the Borough – early intervention and successful public campaigns about paying rent have resulted in improved rent collection levels.

Homelessness applications decided in 33 days



- We manage over 3,600 dwellings, 900 garages and 200 leasehold properties in grounds that have over 3,600 hectares of landscaping and 5,700 trees.
- In 2001/02 we dealt with 241 homelessness applications.
- The Home Improvement Agency (Homelink) helped to improve the quality of life of 234 elderly and vulnerable clients by assisting with home repairs, disabled facilities and the handy person scheme.
- Our Home Support Service provides special care and assistance to 950 older people in sheltered and supported housing.



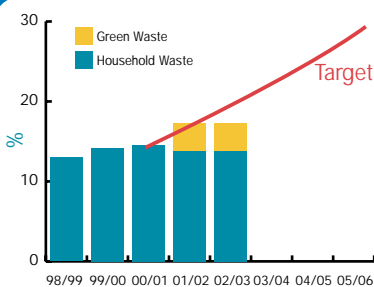


# A Clean and Green Environment

Preserving and enhancing the environment through the adoption of sustainable social, economic and environmental policies is key to improving the quality of life for residents and those who work in, or visit the Borough.

Our job is to keep streets and other public areas clean, collect refuse, maintain and enhance green areas such as parks and countryside and provide and manage car parking. We also aim to ensure the most efficient use of urban land and promote sustainable alternatives such as waste minimisation and recycling, reduction of energy and water consumption and the adoption of renewable energy systems.

Household/green waste recycled



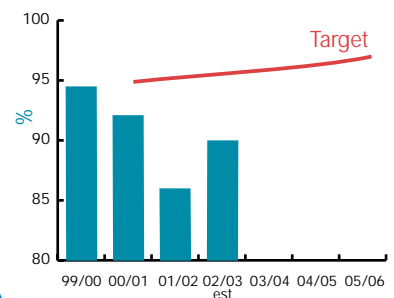
This year, the Council adopted a new Waste Management Strategy which will reduce the amount of waste disposed of to landfill. The first step will be the introduction of a pilot collection service using wheeled bins. Further details will be released to those in the pilot area in the near future.

## CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

The Borough Council intends to build on its energy services success and develop a strategy which sets a target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80% of 1990 levels by the year 2090. In order to do this, the Council is committed to:

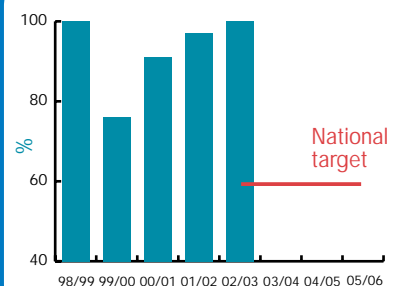
- Use of sustainable combined heat and power sources in the Borough - discouraging the production of CO<sub>2</sub> type gases
- Increased use of photovoltaic and renewable energy
- Incorporating, at the next review of the Local Plan, planning policies which will seek to ensure that new development in the Borough reduces CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions
- Adopting a target of purchasing 100% of the Council's electrical and thermal energy requirements from sustainable sources and 20% from renewable sources by 2010/11
- Exploring means of creating environmentally friendly energy from waste and encouraging the avoidance of landfill

Acceptable or high standard of street cleanliness



As a result of the Best Value Review of Grounds Maintenance, we have engaged a new partner SERCO in an Environmental Maintenance Contract, which includes street cleaning. Once this contract has been established, we expect to see significant improvements in levels of cleanliness.

Homes built on previously developed land



## Did you know?

Over the last five years, the Council provided 3,026 energy conservation grants to help households in fuel poverty.

# Protecting Our Community

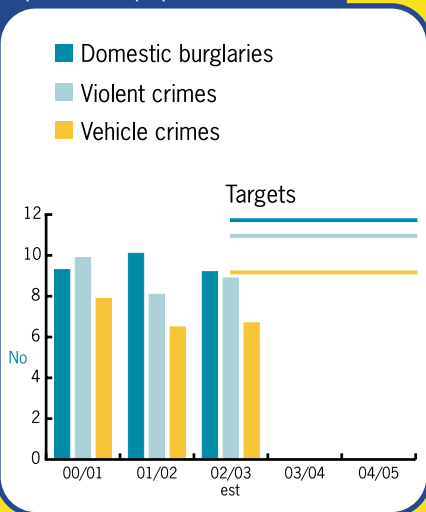


The health and well being of residents is a key aim for the Council. Services such as Environmental Health and Planning seek to protect what is best in the environment including air quality, open space, heritage sites and set high standards in relation to urban design.

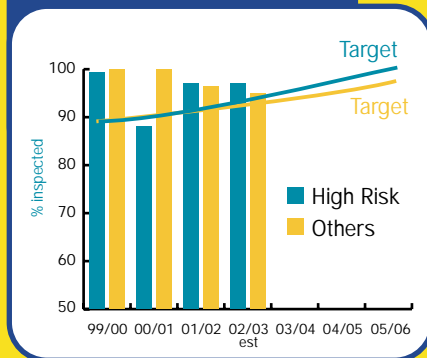
We also work closely with other bodies such as the Police and Surrey County Council through the Safer Working Partnership to reduce crime and tackle the fear of crime.



Crime in Woking per 1,000 population



## Inspecting food premises



The Council provides advice and training to local businesses on food hygiene and health and safety.

We deal with over 1300 planning applications each year and consult immediate neighbours on all applications.

## Did you know?

The Council investigates over 300 planning and 750 noise complaints every year.

We complete 100% of our land searches within the Government's target of 10 days. Our average response time is 2 working days.

In a recent survey carried out as part of a Best Value Review of our services:

- 85% of users had a very positive or positive impression of Environmental Health Services
- 91% of users had a very positive or positive impression of Building Control Services

90% of applications to carry out works to protected trees are determined within 6 weeks.

## Improving Access to our Services

The Council has developed an on-line system setting out which trees are protected by a preservation order – TREES is available at [www.woking.gov.uk/trees](http://www.woking.gov.uk/trees)

In addition, a wide range of free planning advice and access to our Local Plan can be found on our website pages, together with our new Building Control 'Submit a Plan' – system which allows the electronic submission of plans

Why not have a look at:- [www.woking.gov.uk/council/planning](http://www.woking.gov.uk/council/planning)

| Speed of determining planning applications  | 00/01 | 01/02 | Target 02/03 |
|---|-------|-------|--------------|
| Major applications determined in 13 weeks<br><i>e.g. office schemes over 1000sq m and housing over 10 units</i> | 22%   | 35%   | 60%          |
| Minor applications determined in 8 weeks<br><i>e.g. housing infill and smaller commercial schemes</i>           | 47%   | 65%   | 68%          |
| Other applications determined in 8 weeks<br><i>e.g. home extensions and changes of use</i>                      | 82%   | 85%   | 85%          |



# Accessible Community Facilities

Encouraging people to participate in leisure and cultural activities and providing facilities and activities that are accessible for everyone is one of our main objectives.

Our aim is to improve the health and well being of our community, contribute to lifelong learning and personal development, strengthen local identity, promote economic vitality and enhance the outdoor environment.

We provide and maintain a variety of sporting and arts facilities and manage a range of parks, recreation and sports grounds and other outdoor facilities. We also promote independence amongst elderly and vulnerable members of our community through community and drop in centres and services such as Community Meals and Careline.

## GREEN SUCCESS

Woking Park has been awarded 'Green Flag' status by the Civic Trust in recognition of its high standards and community involvement.

'A Green Haven' - Woking Borough's entry to the Hampton Court Flower show won a silver medal. It has since been relocated to Brockhill.

The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners awarded us the Waterlow Trophy for work done to promote and manage allotments.

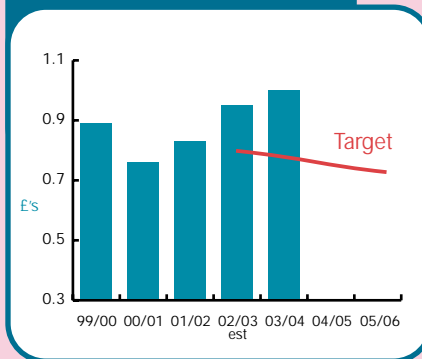
## Did you know?

The Community Meals Service operates on every day of the year and provided 165,408 meals in 2002. In addition, there were over 241,000 visits to our Centres and Drop in Centres.

## WOKING GALLERIES

Last year, we asked for the community's views on proposals to build The Galleries, a new community arts and heritage centre in Woking. The majority of respondents were in favour of supporting the project and we are helping by identifying a site, making a contribution to development costs and assisting with running costs. With the Council's support, The Galleries will be making an application for Heritage Lottery funding later this year.

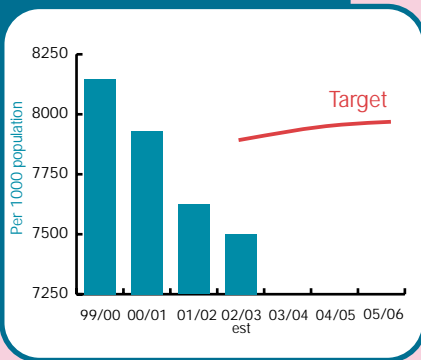
Cost per swim/visit



An independent Best Value Inspection of our leisure activities rated our services as good (two stars) with promising prospects of improvement. We have identified key issues to be improved such as providing more swimming lessons, achieving greater cost efficiencies and considering options for service delivery at the Leisure Centre and Pool in the Park to enhance the range, quality and accessibility of activities.

Woking's new Cultural Strategy which will set the Borough's future priorities for culture and leisure activities, is currently being developed. Consultation on its contents with local community and partner organisations will take place in spring/early summer 2003

Number of swims/visits



If you have any general comments on this Plan please contact David Johnson on 01483 743060 or email: david.johnson@woking.gov.uk

If you want more information about specific service areas please contact:

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dennis.holmes@woking.gov.uk

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ray.lee@woking.gov.uk

Environmental Services  
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Housing  
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steve.bonsor@woking.gov.uk

Secretariat  
Alan Harrison  
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alan.harrison@woking.gov.uk

Woking Borough Council  
Civic Offices  
Gloucester Square  
Woking  
GU21 6YL

[www.woking.gov.uk](http://www.woking.gov.uk)



Pictured on the front cover are photographs showing some of Woking's recent achievements.

*These include:*

- Winner of the Waterlow Trophy for the Borough's allotment gardens.
- A 'Good' rating with Promising Prospects for Improvement for the Best Value Review of Leisure Services.
- The Green Flag award for high standards in Woking Park.
- Over 50 events across the Borough grant funded by Woking Borough Council to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen's Golden Jubilee, including the Woking Golden Jubilee Carnival.
- The Investor in People Award - the national standard which sets a level of good practice for training and development of people to achieve business goals.
- The Queen's Award for Enterprise in recognition of the Council's ground-breaking approach to sustainable community energy systems and the practical steps it is taking locally to tackle global warming.

Best Value

