

Your Council Tax 2024/25



Cllr Ann-Marie Barker

Leader of Woking
Borough Council and
elected member for
Goldsworth Park

It has been almost a year since government intervened in Woking Borough Council and a Section 114 Notice was issued stopping all but essential spending due to our unprecedented financial challenges.

To tackle these challenges we must first start to live within our means.

This has meant making many difficult decisions. We will offer fewer day care services, public toilets are likely to close, and we will reduce the frequency of grass cutting in our parks and cleaning of our streets and public spaces.

We can no longer give grants to local charities and voluntary groups that offer invaluable services to residents and up to 60 council staff face redundancy.

We will also need to sell assets in a managed way over the next few years.

However, we listened to resident feedback and looked for solutions to save services. We have kept Pool in the Park open by offering fewer concessions and charging a little more. We have transferred delivery of some services to neighbouring councils, and in the future, community centres and sports pavilions will be managed by community groups.

We have found some funds for Citizens' Advice Woking and are grateful to Woking Community Transport for continuing some level of Bustler service.

In February we agreed to save £8.4 million, but our financial situation is so severe that we cannot deal with it on our own.

The council has accepted a government support package that will allow us to start tackling our £2.1 billion debt, which currently costs us £64 million a year in interest repayments alone, and set a balanced budget for the coming financial year.

This significant and unprecedented support will give us flexibility to deal with money that should have been put aside for borrowing and to capitalise our debt. The government considers that an increase in Woking Borough Council's proportion of Council Tax of up to 10% from April is appropriate and proportionate. For a Band D property this is 50p a week.

Any increase is difficult, so we are putting in place support for those who find it hard to pay rising household bills.

These critical decisions are ones I did not want to make. They are necessary if the council is to continue to provide essential services, set a balanced budget and begin to return Woking to long-term financial sustainability.

The future remains difficult and challenging. I am determined that Woking will recover to become a better council focused on delivering essential services to you.



Find out how we are spending your Council Tax on providing vital services to over 100,000 residents, visit woking.gov.uk/council-spend

Shaping the *future*
of our borough



Who gets your Council Tax and what are their responsibilities?



74%
Surrey County Council

Education

Fire and rescue services

Highways and transport

Libraries

Social care

Strategic planning



14%
Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey

Represents your views on police and crime matters

Sets police and crime priorities plan

Provides essential funding

Oversees key decisions



12%
Woking Borough Council

Car parks and parking

Planning applications

Public and private housing and local development plans

Waste and recycling services

Our Improvement and Recovery Plan

In recognition of the scale of the task ahead, we have developed a plan around five key themes, each with a strategic aim.

01. Financial recovery

Sustainable budget management, making difficult decisions whilst delivering against council strategic priorities and safeguarding future capacity.

02. Commercial

Release the council from unaffordable commitments, whilst protecting the public purse and optimising the value of existing assets.

03. Governance and assurance

Ensure risk is managed and decisions are made transparently and safely, improving future decision-making.

04. Organisation and service redesign

Deliver a smaller, data driven organisation, where staff feel empowered and digitally confident and are delivering on key priorities.

05. Housing recovery and improvement

Ensure service is compliant with regulatory standards and deliver an efficient, reliable and modern service that meets statutory requirements and supports strong neighbourhoods and communities for residents.

Read more about our Improvement and Recovery Plan by visiting woking.gov.uk/irp



Are you ready to vote on Thursday 2 May 2024?

On Thursday 2 May 2024, local borough council and Police and Crime Commissioner elections will take place. Please remember:

- You must be registered to vote – the closing date is Tuesday 16 April.
- If you choose to vote in person, you must show accepted photo ID. If you do not have any accepted photo ID, you can apply for a free Voter Authority Card.
- There are important changes if you vote by post or by proxy.

Full information is available by visiting woking.gov.uk/elections-2024

Could you help support local charities through the Woking Community Fund?

The Woking Community Fund is managed by the Community Foundation for Surrey, an independent charity and provides grants to help regenerate communities in Woking, enhance local capacity, and foster partnerships to address community needs, especially for those marginalised or vulnerable. All donations received will be solely dedicated to supporting organisations that support those most in need in Woking. This includes organisations that focus on supporting local community projects, advice and community transport services

To donate to the Woking Community Fund, please visit cfsurrey.org.uk/wokingdonate or call **01483 478092**.