

# Towards a Vision for Wokingham Borough

Summary of Community Futures workshops and  
next steps to creating a joint community vision

May 2023

## 1. The Context

Over the past four months, we have worked with consultant New Local to start the development of a Vision for Wokingham Borough.

This report is to update you on work done to date with New Local, who have helped us work with partners to:

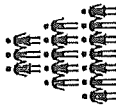
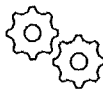
- Identify key themes / priorities from stakeholder workshops for the borough's future that can inform the vision
- Gauge the appetite among stakeholders for involvement in co-development of the vision
- Explore potential governance and processes to develop the vision

One of the key principles that emerged from the sessions with New Local is that the vision must be co-produced and not led just by the borough council. We will, therefore, be seeking expressions of interest from partners to join a Community Steering Group that will guide the vision's development.

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## 2. Community Future workshops: New Local have facilitated three workshops with a range of partner organisations and representatives from the borough town and parish councils



3 workshops between Jan – Mar 2023

With c.150 attendances across workshops

With community representation from 50+ organisations

Date	Session	Audience	Focus
30/01/23 (6 – 8pm)	Community Future – Workshop 1	60+ attendees from across communities and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kick-off vision building process with community</li> <li>• Generate radical thinking around vision for the borough in next 10/15 years</li> <li>• Give space for ideas and reflection</li> <li>• Create building block for a community action plan</li> </ul>
6/03/23 [4-6pm]	Community Futures –Town and Parish Councils	~50 attendees from Towns and Parish Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kick-off vision building process with TPCs</li> <li>• Generate radical thinking around vision for the borough in next 10-15 years, with a localised lens applied</li> <li>• Emerging ideas and reflection</li> <li>• Give space for feedback on how best to engage in the future</li> </ul>
20/3/23 [6-8pm]	Community Futures – Workshop 2	~40+ attendees from across communities and partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share outputs from earlier workshops and inputs</li> <li>• Understand the overall roadmap for delivering a Wokingham Vision</li> <li>• Engage in creative brainstorming about the key pillars of the roadmap in terms of engaging with (1) Partners and (2) Communities.</li> <li>• Understand the key structures that partners can engage with and develop the process for longer-term engagement (governance, feedback etc,)</li> </ul>

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**3. Working Together and Building On Strengths:** The series of workshop was a first step as part of a wider effort for Wokingham Borough to understand what the community wants and together design a vision and strategy to deliver on the communities' aspirations. We have started that journey by exploring the existing strong foundations that make the borough a great place to live and work and how those characteristics – community, innovation, collaboration and more – can be leveraged to build a better future.

### Building on strengths

- There is huge level of support and buy-in to drive a vision that is both co-designed and co-owned by the community. There is a strong belief in positive opportunities for creating this in partnership through harnessing support of Wokingham's diverse communities
- Strong sense of pride within the community about their place, with a sense of equality of opportunity supported by initiatives that strive for further equality in the borough
- Collaboration between partners is strong and has led to real change and positive impact for communities
- (Covid-19, Hardship Alliance, thriving VCSE sector)
- Pride for how the Wokingham Borough has come together in crisis (Covid-19, Ukraine resettlement programme), with a sense that this energy should be leveraged to build an even better Wokingham
- Emphasis on each individual enjoying an equal voice, at all levels (young people, adults etc.)

### Working Together

- Strong appetite to involve all community members in shaping the vision, each bringing their own expertise and strengths to the collaboration
- Being truly inclusive and representative is key to building a vision that is owned by the whole community
- Understand what the roadmap for developing the vision is and what role each community group / partner has to play within it
- Appetite for creativity in community engagement – pushing thinking beyond consultation (social media, public ideas board, working with young people)
- The need to remove formality and create “safe spaces” for open and honest conversation. Strong sense that face to face is always better
- Work iteratively and solicit feedback often. Find ways to regularly

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**4. Emerging themes and priorities: Early insight into the types of issues that partner organisations and Town and Parish Councils feel the borough wide vision should address are captured below. These will be further informed, verified and developed through the community engagement activity.**

### **Emerging themes: Partner organisations**

- Tackling poverty – no need for foodbanks, housing list eradicated
- Economic opportunities – new jobs created, local people supported to access opportunities, education matched to labour market
- Environment and energy – reduction in energy consumption, greater energy self-sufficiency
- Entrepreneurial drive – supporting young people into business, new opportunities with tech
- Healthier and happier residents – through active travel, clean air, good jobs, patient centred care
- Community power – national leaders visit to learn about community power, all have equal voice and chances, give power away

### **Emerging themes: Town and Parish**

- Environment – quality of green space, accessibility, managed development
- Pride in place – physical improvements, sense of neighbourliness, promoting Wokingham as a great place to live/work
- Empowerment – involving communities in bottom up initiatives, encouraging social action, promoting collaboration across communities
- Young people – meeting needs, improving services and opportunities for young people
- Business – ensuring the business community are part of shaping the future, are enabled to support community initiatives
- Health and wellbeing – natural environment improvements, quality leisure facilities

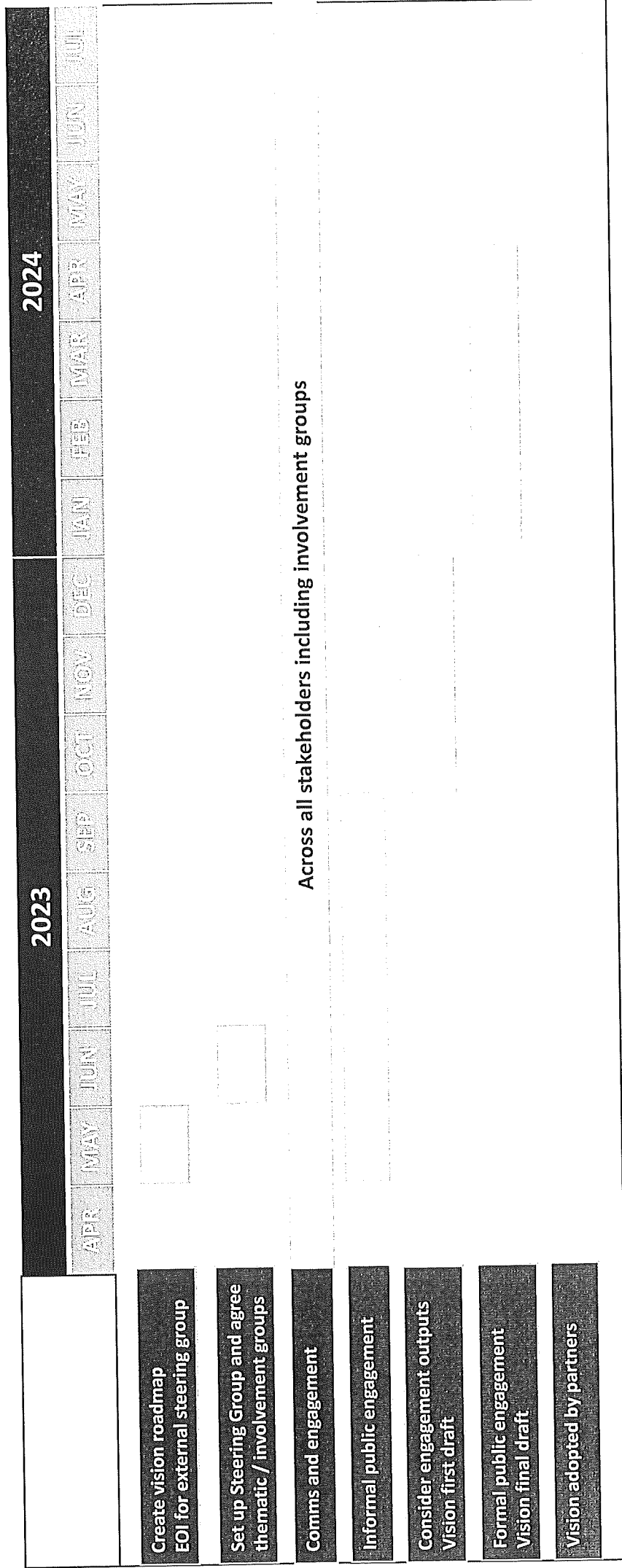
5. We asked participants: If the Vision could do one thing?

- Inspire and be aspirational about the future we want
- Empower residents, communities, partners and TPCs
- Improve quality of life for residents
- Reduce inequality and increase opportunities for all
- Be focused on outcomes and deliver on promises
- Build on strengths by deepening collaboration between partners



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## 6. Proposed process and indicative timeline



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**7. Proposed governance steering group:** There was a broad consensus at the Community Futures sessions that a Community Vision Steering Group should be set up to guide the process of developing and agreeing the community vision

**Steering Group would be independent of council and would be responsible to guide drafting of the vision and ensuring:**

- The vision is co-produced and co-owned by a wide range of partners
- The vision is reflective of the aspirations of the community as a whole
- Cross-cutting themes are identified
- Ongoing mechanism / partnership arrangements are in place to successful deliver vision

**Suggested governance: building on feedback at the Communities Futures workshop and their experience, New Local recommend:**

- The Steering Group comprise no more than 15 representatives
- The steering group should initially meet monthly. After the first three months it should then either continue to meet monthly or move to a bi-monthly meeting, subject to the requirements of the work. Meetings will ideally be held in person.

**Suggested composition of steering group:**

- Voluntary and Community Sector representatives (x3)
- Children and young people representatives (x3)
- Local government representatives (x3)
- Businesses representatives (x2)
- Community Safety Partnership representative
- Health sector representative
- Equalities Forum representative

**What good governance will look and feel like (based on feedback at Community Futures workshops):**

- Shared ownership
- Doors open
- Fairness
- Open and transparent
- Inclusive engagement
- Accessible / engaging language
- Clear boundaries
- You need to find outcomes, and outputs that get you there
- Easy
- Agile
- Slick
- Transparent
- Simple
- No red tape
- Honest
- Accountable



## 8. Proposed governance Involvement Groups:

There was broad consensus that a series of sub-groups (Vision Involvement Groups) should sit alongside the Steering Group. The purpose of the Involvement Groups will be to support and inform the Steering Group's work to develop a borough-wide community vision

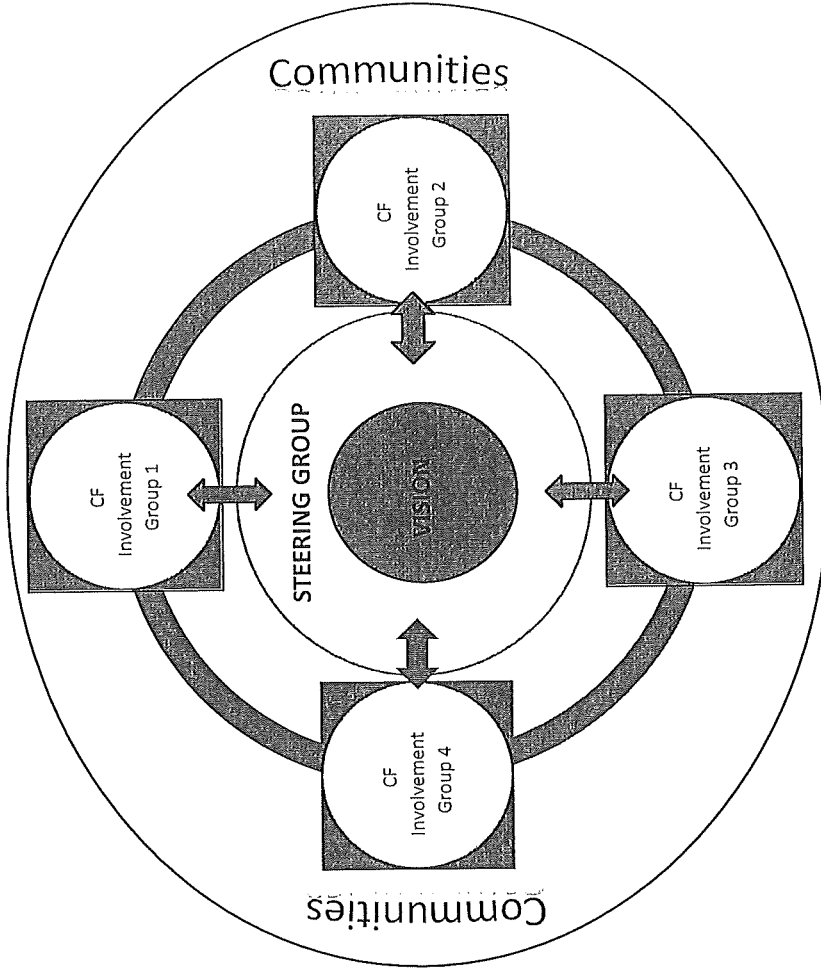
The precise number and blend of Involvement Groups should be agreed by the Steering Group at its first meeting.

New Local's suggestion is that these are a blend of issue based and population specific sub-groups and that working with existing forums and networks should be prioritised (e.g. Equality Forum, Hardship Alliance). New sub-groups should only be formed where there are gaps. These can be informal and time limited.

We are proposing to combine the Involvement Groups in to themes based on feedback from the Community Futures workshop sessions

### **Wider public engagement**

**In addition to working through Involvement Groups, it is proposed to engage directly with residents to ensure all residents are able to contribute the vision**



**9. Community engagement and communications: Community engagement and good communications are vital if the vision is to capture and reflect the experiences, ideas and priorities of the borough's residents and communities**

Building on the feedback on priorities from the Community Future session, we have identified six themes under which the Vision Involvement Groups could sit in order to give the process of producing the community vision some structure without being overly bureaucratic.

Cross-cutting priority themes						
	Health and Well-Being	Equality, Inclusion and Opportunity	Environment and Sustainability	Community engagement, action and empowerment	Engaging with young people	Engaging with businesses
Themes from Community Future sessions	Tackling poverty Economic opportunities Young people Health and Well-Being	Tackling poverty Economic opportunities Entrepreneurial drive Young people Business	Environment and energy Pride of place Environment Young People	Community power Pride of place Young people	Young People	Business Economic opportunities
Interested organisations (from participants at Community Futures sessions)	Youth Council CLASP Places Leisure Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust WBC Public Health	Youth Council The Cowshed First Days University of Reading Age UK Berkshire DWP Probation Service Churches Together	Youth Council WATCH Wokingham University of Reading Reading Buses	Youth Council Wokingham Volunteer Centre RBFRS TVP Towns and Parish Councils Involve Churches Together	Youth Council	
Other potentially interested organisations	HealthWatch Cultural Partnership GPs	Thames Valley LEP Chamber of Commerce Positive Futures Registered Social Landlords	Bucks, Berks and Oxon Wildlife Trust Utility companies Major landowners / developers	Other faith groups Youth groups Reading FC (Community outreach) Neighbourhood Action Groups Residents' Associations	Other youth groups Sports clubs Schools and colleges University of Reading	Thames Valley LEP Chamber of Commerce

- What good communication will look and feel like (based on feedback at Community Futures workshops):**
- Listening to what the other person is saying
  - Being ready to change your mind
  - Non-jargon
  - Tailored to audience
  - Regular
  - Respectful
  - Effective
  - Caring
  - Giving clarity
  - Giving confidence
  - Honest

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## 10. Next steps:

### Governance and process

Steering Group established: members agreed and first meeting held

Involvement Groups: format agreed and meeting underway

Online platform established: single point of information and digital engagement

Informal public engagement launched

### Partners and participants

Become an ambassador for the vision – update your staff teams/ user groups / colleagues / members

Get involved – groups and individuals not in the Steering Group are needed to input into the vision and can lead or join Involvement Groups

Identify any existing groups who could act as Involvement Groups or in other ways be engaged in the production of the vision

Identify any existing or forthcoming plans (e.g. events, activities, consultations) that could provide an engagement opportunity for the community vision

