

Vision statement for Waverley-Guildford collaboration

Agreement noted by the two Executives of Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council on the scope of their preferred partnering relationship covering: context, vision, principles, ambition, governance arrangements, communication and priority areas for business case development.

Context - Addressing the 'why' partner question? Where is the common ground for Guildford and Waverley?

1. Face budget challenges over the next 4 years.
2. Need to make savings beyond internal capacity to do so.
3. Seek to protect, improve, and expand discretionary services, and explore new services.
4. See each other as natural neighbours with common interests geographically, economically and environmentally.
5. Support and strengthen our parish and town councils' democratic and local mandates.
6. See local government reorganisation and the SCC single mega-unitary as a threat and an opportunity and want to be well-prepared if unitaries become a reality.

Vision - What kind of partnership do we seek? What are the key features that will shape our partnership?

7. The collaboration needs to be enduring and strategic based on the evidence as to what approach is best. We will seek a joint CX and a shared management team to implement the strategic vision. Although finances are the driver, there is scope to deliver services in a way greater than the sum of two councils.
8. Have a preferred partnering arrangement – striving to create one team, one culture to unlock the most gains. Stronger together. The arrangement should be business case led. It should pave the way for future collaboration if initial stages are successful.
9. A long-term, politically led, and sustainable partnership that puts residents and communities first.
10. Seek a 'equitable powerful together' collaborative partnership, that ensures the total is greater than the sum of its parts.
11. Focus on the delivery of better outcomes for residents and communities, always acting with the residents and communities at heart.
12. Recognition that there will be differences in service delivery models and priorities between the two councils.
13. A shared ambition to create a new type of council (model/vehicle) that other partners will want to collaborate with or join.

Partnership Principles – scoping the partnership. How will we work together?

15. Each council will retain its own constitution, setting out how it makes decisions, re-organises scrutiny and delegates authority.
16. Each council will continue to set its own council tax and publish its own budget and accounts.
17. Each council will continue to be able to set its own corporate plan, using a common template and language, seeking wherever possible to harmonise ambition.
18. No council can be 'out-voted' by the other council in a way which requires that council to adopt a policy, accept a cost or change a priority that its decision makers are not willing to support.
19. There will be no change in the name of any of the councils.
20. The costs of changes and the benefits achieved from change will be fairly attributed and shared to the satisfaction of both councils.

21. No council will be obliged to break an existing contract.
22. Each council will continue to speak up for its own residents, even where there is an apparent conflict of interest between the councils but will strive to secure an agreed approach where conflict around inward investment opportunities arise.
23. Each council will seek to harmonise wherever possible, but will be able to set its own policy for which and how services are delivered.
24. The councils can commission or grant aid on their own but will seek to harmonise or jointly commission wherever possible.
25. Nothing within the partnership is intended to stop councils developing local ideas about how to support their local communities.
26. Each council will seek to align its internal governance and democratic structures and its relationship to one another.
27. Each council will default to the harmonisation of services wherever possible.
28. The collaboration between GBC and WBC must go beyond shared management and shared services and be strategic in intent.
29. Ambition is to secure a longer-term sustainable future for both councils through collaboration in a preferred partner relationship.
30. Both organisations to retain autonomy, accountability and local identity.
31. The collaboration must have the residents at its heart.
32. The collaboration is not a take-over by one council of the other.
33. The collaboration should support the creation of a new shared organisational team/culture where appropriate, through a single senior management team (chief executive, directors, heads of service), who will make recommendations for further organisational collaboration.

Partnership Ambition – What do we want to achieve together. What is the size of the prize?

34. By working together being bigger, stronger, louder, and more influential, locally, regionally, and nationally.
35. Creating the scale of operation capable of jointly securing financial saving of the magnitude of circa £4m pa based on the 2022/23 budgets as its first milestone and more thereafter.
36. Ensure that the collaboration enhances both councils' ambitions for carbon neutrality.
37. Use the best of both councils to explore scaling and in-sourcing services where there is a business case and protect/create local jobs.
38. Be prepared to propose a positive solution that builds on this partnership if/when the Government makes unitary councils a reality.
39. Maintain existing council priority services and seek to protect and improve non-statutory services.
40. A collaborative partnership that strive to deliver social value and or value for money to local residents, by being innovative in how it operates and works at pace.

Leading Collaboratively – Sharing the leadership. How will the partnership be led and governed?

41. A joint working group (JWG) comprising leaders/deputy leaders and CEXs to provide leadership of feasibility studies and business cases.
42. JWG reporting to Joint Executive at key decision points.
43. Both councils align their governance arrangements including scrutiny to provide oversight of feasibility study.
44. JWG to agree a shared disputes protocols and exit strategies if parties subsequently wish to end the partnership.

Multiple voices – one message. How will the partnership be communicated, and staff engaged?

45. JWG responsible for all communications and messaging.
46. A clear process for agreeing a single message on behalf of the partnership, which can then be tailored for different audiences.
47. Regular joint staff briefings – so that staff across all levels are fully engaged in the feasibility study.
48. Staff and unions to be consulted and supported through the culture change of shared service working.
49. The JWG to set up work-streams where staff and unions can directly input into the feasibility study and bring their ideas to the fore.

Scoping the feasibility study. How will the business cases be prioritised?

50. Phase 1 – To determine an approximate order of magnitude around potential net savings that could be generated from increased collaboration and provide an initial view on the implications of the two delivery options being considered.
51. Phase 2 – To develop a detailed Business Case to enable these councils deliver their agreed shared service arrangements and realise the benefits including financial savings.