

SHOULD YOU REQUIRE THIS DOCUMENT IN AN ALTERNATIVE FORMAT PLEASE  
CONTACT THE COUNCIL AND SEE OUR ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

# Guildford and Waverley Borough Councils

Report to:	Council
Date:	22 January 2025 (GBC) / 28 January 2025 (WBC)
Ward(s) affected:	All
Report of Director of:	Pedro Wrobel, Chief Executive
Report Author:	Pedro Wrobel
Email:	Pedro.Wrobel@guildford.gov.uk
Lead Executive Member:	Carla Morson (GBC) / Paul Follows (WBC)
Email:	Carla.Morson@guildford.gov.uk paul.follows@waverley.gov.uk
Status:	Open
Key decision:	No

## Local Partnerships Review of the Collaboration

### 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 On 23 July 2024, Guildford Borough Council endorsed the report on the SOLACE governance reviews and the Improvement Plan. The Improvement Plan aims to address the recommendations from the reviews and achieve Guildford's outcome of meeting its Best Value duty and becoming a well-managed and resilient council. One of the recommendations of the SOLACE report, agreed by Guildford Borough Council, was that both Councils assessed the Collaboration programme.
- 1.2 In 2024, Local Partnerships, a consultancy that is part owned by the Local Government Association (LGA) and HM Treasury, was commissioned to provide an independent assessment on the benefits of our collaboration to date, and also the nature and potential value of further collaborative opportunities between us.

- 1.3 The analysis concluded that the collaboration has had a net benefit, and this benefit will grow moving forward, as benefits are ongoing, but costs are one-off. The councils' overall cost base is lower than it would have been without the collaboration, and there has been no evident deterioration in performance.
- 1.4 The report also concluded that other collaborations elsewhere have achieved much bigger benefits, and there should be much more to be had from Guildford and Waverley working together, and integrating more closely.
- 1.5 The report has provided a useful assessment of the collaboration so far, ensuring that the Council has visibility and assurance on the programme. It also provides the Council direction in the nature and potential size of further opportunity for cost saving and outcome improvement in our service delivery.

## **2.0 Recommendation to Council**

### **That the Council resolves to:**

- 2.1 Note the Local Partnership Review of the Collaboration report and make observations and comments on its content.

## **3.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 Recognising the importance of the Collaboration programme in becoming a well-managed and resilient council, this report seeks to ensure that both Councils have an independent assessment and assurance on the Collaboration programme so far.

## **4.0 Status of Report**

- 4.1 No parts of this report are exempt from publication.

## **5.0 Strategic Priorities**

- 5.1 The Collaboration is a key programme to assist both councils in becoming well-managed and resilient by working to streamline service delivery, learn from one another, and innovate.

- 5.2 By doing so we will make sure that we take every opportunity the partnership offers, large or small, to reduce our costs, increase our income and improve the services we provide to the people who live, work and do business in our boroughs.

## **6.0 Background**

- 6.1 Guildford and Waverley Councils have been collaborating since 2022, sharing a Chief Executive and Joint Leadership Team (JLT).
- 6.2 Guildford Borough Council commissioned a review of their governance, operations and culture in January 2024. The review was undertaken by SOLACE (The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers) and their main finding was that Guildford was at serious risk of failing in its statutory duty to deliver Best Value. The review provided a number of recommendations to enable Guildford Borough Council to deliver as quickly as possible, and assist the Council avoid such a failure which would have serious consequences for the authority.
- 6.3 On 23 July 2024, Guildford Borough Council endorsed the report on the SOLACE governance reviews and the Improvement Plan. The Improvement Plan aims to address the recommendations from the reviews and achieve our outcome of meeting our Best Value duty and becoming a well-managed and resilient council. One of the recommendations of the SOLACE report, agreed by Guildford Borough Council, was that both Councils reviewed the Collaboration programme and this became an action within Guildford's Improvement Plan.
- 6.4 As a result, Local Partnerships, a consultancy that is part owned by the Local Government Association (LGA) and HM Treasury, was commissioned to assist Guildford and Waverley Borough Councils by assessing the benefits of our collaboration to date, and also the nature and potential value of further collaborative opportunities between us.
- 6.5 This report was funded through the LGA and was delivered at no cost to either Council.

## **7. Summary of Report Findings**

- 7.1 The introduction of a shared Chief Executive and Joint Leadership Team (JLT) has already generated savings of £603,000. The savings show that the partnership, even including one-off costs, has delivered more financial value than it cost, with potential for even greater savings in the future. The councils' overall cost base is lower than it would have been without the collaboration, and there has been no evident deterioration in performance.
- 7.2 Financial saving is one benefit identified from collaborative working, but the collaboration has also provided non-monetary benefits such as some shared functions, shared learning and best practice, shared policies and joint approaches to consultation responses.
- 7.3 The collaboration has also provided a platform for further cost-saving opportunities, such as shared services and central functions.
- 7.4 The report concludes that the councils now need to consider the next steps of the collaboration as it would be unprecedented to stay in the current position of having a Joint Leadership Team but no shared services. The report concludes that expanding the collaboration could enhance the existing net benefits.

## **8.0 Consultation**

- 8.1 This report was commissioned by officers, on behalf of Group Leaders. It has not been through the Executive, and is presented directly to Full Council.

## **9.0 Key Risks**

- 9.1 The report from Local Partnerships concludes it would be unprecedented to stay in the current position of the collaboration programme without any meaningful sharing of services and the Councils will want to consider this implication and the findings of this report to inform the next steps of the collaboration programme.

## **10.0 Legal and Governance Implications**

- 10.1 Section 113 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides a local authority with a statutory power to enter into an agreement with another local authority for the placing at the disposal of the latter for the purposes of their functions, on such terms as may be provided by the agreement, of the services of officers employed by the former, after consulting such officers.
- 10.2 Section 101 Local Government Act 1972 provides a power for a Local Authority to arrange for the discharge of any of their functions by any other Local Authority.
- 10.3 An inter authority agreement, in accordance with s113 Local Government Act 1972, was executed between the parties of Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council.

## **11.0 Financial Implications**

- 11.1 The report summarises that there has been financial savings as a result of the Collaboration programme, namely the introduction of a shared Chief Executive and Joint Leadership Team (JLT), which has already generated savings of £603,000 across both Councils.

## **12.0 Human Resources Implications**

- 12.1 The overall drivers for the collaboration between Guildford and Waverley Borough Councils are about providing sustainable services and making financial savings across the two Councils. These are both to have an impact in terms of Human Resources Implications for the workforce, and there has been agreement to appoint a new role of Joint Assistant Director of People effective from 1 April 2025, subject to budget approval by Full Council.
- 12.2 This will help deliver the capacity and capability needed to embed success in ongoing collaboration efforts and enhance the pace of future collaboration, transition to shared services and realisation of cashable and non-cashable savings.

## **13.0 Equality and Diversity Implications**

13.1 This duty has been considered in the context of this report and it has been concluded that there are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from this report. Impact assessments may be required as individual business cases and proposals are developed and will be reported as appropriate.

## **14.0 Climate Change and Sustainability Implications**

14.1 The climate change emergency declaration and the target for net zero carbon by 2030 is a critical objective for both councils. While no specific impacts on the climate emergency declaration have been identified as a consequence of this report, the Councils will be assessing and prioritising the environmental, climate and carbon impacts of any future collaboration proposals.

## **15.0 Next Steps**

15.1 This report from Local Partnerships will be used to inform the next steps for the Collaboration Programme, and any future discussions on local government reorganisation.

15.2 The Councils will be considering a range of options that could see further services shared across both organisations. These will be carefully evaluated through business case work to make sure they deliver financial and non-financial benefits.

## **16.0 Appendices**

Appendix 1: Local Partnerships Report – Analysis of Collaboration benefits