

GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL AND WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

SOCIAL VALUE STRATEGY

2026 - 2027

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Foreword

Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council are committed to becoming fair and thriving places to live, work, and do business. Social value is central to realising this vision. This strategy sets out our commitment to go beyond simply making good investments to consider how we can do good with the investments that we make. In doing so, we will ensure that our actions generate real and lasting benefits for our respective Boroughs.

We are proud to adopt a strategy that places social value at the heart of our decision-making. Whether engaging with local supply chains, improving opportunities for young people, or minimising negative impacts to the environment, social value connects our long-term ambitions to current opportunities.

Working in partnership with local businesses, organisations, and residents, we will deliver long-lasting benefits to the communities, environment and economies of both Guildford and Waverley. Through this, we will ensure the Boroughs continue to serve the needs of our residents long into the future.

In adopting this strategy now, we can ensure that Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council use the time we have left to build a lasting legacy for our residents and environment, establishing a strong foundation for West Surrey Council to take forward and build upon.

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Executive summary

Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council recognise the wide-reaching benefits that embedding social value into council activities and operations can bring to the local area, communities and the Councils. Through this strategy, we will place social value at the core of our decision making, strengthening our ability to influence positive change for our communities.

This strategy establishes our commitment to maximising opportunities to generate social value across all services. It ensures we have robust measures in place to meet legal requirements and go further wherever possible to deliver additional benefits for our boroughs. To achieve this, we have identified four strategic aims that will guide our approach and ensure that everything we do meaningfully benefits local people, businesses, and the natural environment.

This strategy aligns our social value ambitions with the Council's wider corporate priorities, ensuring a focussed and consistent approach that supports the Councils' long-term goals and delivers real outcomes for our communities.

This strategy is accompanied by an action plan that outlines how the Councils will deliver on the commitments of this strategy. Through a series of tangible actions, we will ensure that social value is embedded into the work of both Councils.

Introduction

Social value can be defined as the wider social, economic and environmental benefits that can be generated through the way in which activities and services are delivered. These benefits extend beyond the expected physical and financial returns on investments and consider additional value that could be generated for the local area and community. Social value encompasses a way of thinking about our activities which requires us to consider not only how we can make good investments, but how we can do good with the investments that we make.

Social value is most commonly associated with procurement. It is a legal requirement for local authorities to consider social value when procuring goods and services (Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012). Changes to legislation are promoting its use. With the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023 in February 2025, focus has shifted from Most Economically Advantageous Tenders (MEAT) to Most Advantageous Tenders (MAT), allowing buyers to prioritise wider public benefit when considering bids. This strategy recognises procurement as an integral aspect of delivering social value and seeks to further embed social value into procurement and commissioning.

Beyond procurement, social value is increasingly being recognised more widely across a range of services within the public sector, as a way of delivering additional benefits to local communities. Whilst social value is already considered in some areas across the Councils, this

strategy aims to embed it consistently across all services to ensure every opportunity to deliver social value is being taken. It aims to expand its use beyond formal procurement requirements by adopting a holistic approach where community outcomes are considered in all departments across each council.

The strategy aims to maximise the social and environmental returns generated from every pound we spend by making it everyone's responsibility to work in ways that support the delivery of social value. The Councils recognise specific challenges faced by communities across the boroughs which social value can help address. In doing so, it will help both Councils achieve the priorities set out in their corporate strategy.

An accompanying action plan supports this strategy, setting out the key actions to be delivered to embed social value across both councils. While the strategy establishes the contexts and objectives for social value, the action plan translates these into tangible deliverables, ensuring opportunities to create social value are actively promoted and that clear, consistent structures and guidance are in place for staff, contractors and partner organisations to support delivery.

Vision and principles

Our vision

We recognise social value as a driving force in achieving our corporate strategy priorities and acknowledge its capacity to create meaningful, lasting benefits for our residents and environment. Working with partners, businesses and the local community, we aim to embed social value into everything we do. We will foster a culture that seeks to maximise the social, environmental and economic value we create. In doing so, we will strengthen opportunities for local people and organisations, support inclusive and sustainable growth, and ensure that Guildford and Waverley remain fair and thriving places for all residents to live, work and do business.

Corporate Strategy

[Guildford Borough Council](#) and [Waverley Borough Council](#)'s Corporate Strategies, adopted in 2024, outline the Councils' priorities and how we plan to make the boroughs a thriving place to live, work and do business.

Embedding social value across both Councils will support the achievement of our priorities. Social value enables projects, policies, and services to deliver value beyond their immediate objectives, without creating additional cost for the Councils. It will deliver greater value for our residents and play an instrumental role in addressing local needs.

Social value contributes to achieving our corporate priorities by becoming:

- **A more sustainable borough:** This strategy will ensure the Councils deliver workstreams that not only minimise harm to the environment but actively improves it, either directly or through contractual requirements with contractors and partners. We will pursue social value opportunities that reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, cut waste and increase biodiversity, creating cleaner, greener spaces across Guildford and Waverley for everyone to enjoy.
- **A more prosperous borough:** Both Councils are committed to being prosperous boroughs, and social value can play an instrumental role in achieving this by providing support to local people and organisations. Investing in local people and organisations enables resilience, productivity and economic growth. We can harness social value to provide opportunities for local employment, training, and skills offers, ensuring public money is reinvested into the local community.
- **A more inclusive borough:** We aim to use social value to address inequality and promote inclusion in our local communities. While this strategy seeks to support all residents, we hope to provide enhanced support to young people, disadvantaged adults, and veterans. Working both directly and with our contractors and partners, the Councils will seize opportunities to deliver social value that promotes the health and wellbeing of our residents.
- **Decent and affordable homes:** Housing is integral to social value – both as a delivery mechanism through which social value can be achieved, and as a target for where social value can be delivered. When constructing homes, we will seek opportunities to invest in the local community and ensure contractors build homes in a transparent and sustainable way.
- **A resilient and well managed Council:** This strategy will make sure the Councils have a consistent and robust approach to social value, ensuring processes are in place when procuring and commissioning goods and services. This will support us to deliver Best Value for our residents and a fair consistent approach when working with contractors and partners.

Strategic aims and objectives

Our key objective for this strategy is to leverage social value to benefit local people, the economy and the environment in the boroughs of Guildford and Waverley. Integrating social value into procurement, commissioning and council activities is both achievable and impactful, directly benefiting our communities.

To address local challenges and align with the Councils' corporate priorities, this strategy has four priority aims:



Each strategic aim has a number of objectives that we will commit to.

Invest in the local economy

We will invest council spending in ways that strengthen the local economy. Through service delivery, procurement and commissioning, we will ensure that public money supports local businesses, creates jobs and builds skills for residents.

This approach will drive inclusive economic growth, improve economic mobility and deliver social value for our communities, particularly for young people.

Objectives:

- Where proportionate, work with and support local micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs).
- Work with contractors to support the creation of jobs, skills and training opportunities for the local community.
- Work with contractors and suppliers to promote opportunities for MSMEs and VCSEs.
- Promote opportunities for pro-bono, volunteering and mentoring.

Invest in local people

We will ensure that council activity actively invests in local people. By working directly, and through contractors and partners, we will create opportunities that improve health and wellbeing, address inequality and promote inclusion.

Our focus will be on supporting those who face the greatest barriers, including young people, disadvantaged adults and veterans, so that our work delivers lasting social value across our communities.

Objectives:

- Work with contractors to provide opportunities for local people, primarily for those not currently engaged in education, employment, or training.
- Promote fair employment practices within our boroughs, ensuring our contractors and partners have fair pay and working conditions and where appropriate pay the real living wage. We will use our employment practices to set an example for how other local employers can provide social value in their own workplaces.
- Generate social value that promotes and improves the health and wellbeing of local people.
- Continue being a responsible local employer who is committed to recruiting, developing and retaining a diverse skilled and motivated workforce, supporting staff wellbeing and career development.
- Identify where needs exist within the local community and work with contractors and partners to address these needs.

Promote environmental sustainability

We will use council spending to support a more environmentally sustainable future for the boroughs and deliver our commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030. Through service delivery, procurement and commissioning, we will prioritise approaches that reduce environmental impact and support sustainable practices.

This includes improving air quality, reducing carbon emissions and increasing local resilience to climate change. We will apply these principles across our own activity and through the organisations we commission, ensuring that public spending contributes to environmental social value for residents.

Objectives:

- Minimise negative impacts to the environment caused by our activities and those of our contractors. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Reducing waste, reducing carbon emissions and ensuring developments are conceived with sensitivity to the natural environment.
 - Ensuring businesses have the knowledge to act in ways which preserve the local environment and encourage carbon reduction.
- Improve biodiversity through project delivery.
- Embed internal carbon pricing into the procurement process.

- Where proportionate, work with contractors who have environmentally friendly practices (e.g. electric fleet, use of eco-friendly materials).

Embed Social Value in Procurement and Commissioning

We will ensure that social value is applied consistently across all procurement and commissioning activity. This will include setting clear requirements, monitoring delivery and measuring outcomes to ensure commitments are fulfilled.

By holding ourselves and our contractors accountable for delivery, we will provide transparency to members, residents and local businesses, and maximise the social value achieved through council spending.

Objectives:

- Implement a consistent, but proportionate approach to social value when procuring goods and services.
- Have robust frameworks in place for the monitoring and reporting of social value.
- Work with contractors and partners to ensure social value commitments are delivered in the local community, ensuring objectives are aligned to local needs. To support this, develop a social value index that will be provided to contractors and partners to ensure social value being delivered aligns with local need.
- Where proportionate, increase the minimum social value weighting applied in the tender process, from 5% up to a maximum of 10%.
- Develop resources that will support contractors through the procurement process to ensure social value opportunities are maximised.

Statutory duties and key legislation

A number of legislative requirements shape how social value must be considered and delivered by public sector organisations. This section outlines the key social value legislation relevant to councils.

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

This act came into force on 31 January 2013 and requires local authorities and other public bodies to consider social value when procuring goods and services. Its purpose is to ensure that commissioning and procurement decisions take into account wider social, economic, and environmental impacts, thereby improving the overall outcomes and benefits of the services delivered.

The Procurement Act 2023

All contracting authorities have a legal duty to have regard to the importance of maximising public benefit when awarding contracts. While the Act does not explicitly use the term 'social value', this duty is widely interpreted to include social, economic, and environmental benefits alongside price and quality considerations. Compliance requires authorities to demonstrate that they have actively considered these wider benefits in procurement decisions, guided by the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS).

The National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) 2025

The NPPS 2025 that sits alongside the Procurement Act 2023 sets out a mission-led procurement framework that builds on the Act's transformation powers. It aims to harness the full potential of public procurement to deliver value for money, drive economic growth and generate social, environmental and broader public value outcomes.

The Equality Act 2010

The Public Sector Equality duty is contained within the Equality Act 2010 and requires local authorities to have due regard for certain equality considerations when exercising their functions and making decisions. Although from different legislation to social value, they are closely aligned in public-sector practice. This duty should be considered when seeking opportunities for and delivering social value to ensure consideration has been given to how decisions will affect people with different protected characteristics.

Strategic context

Local needs

The Indices of Deprivation 2025, show Guildford and Waverley are among the least deprived local authority areas in England. Out of 296 lower tier local authority areas, Guildford is ranked the 15th least deprived and Waverley the 9th. However, although local authority summaries indicate that our boroughs lack deprivation relative to the rest of England, pockets of deprivation still exist.

According to the Indices of Deprivation 2025, the domains where challenges persist in Guildford and Waverley's urban areas include Income, Employment, Education, Skills and Training, Health Deprivation and Disability, and Crime. In rural areas, the primary challenges include Barriers to Housing and Services and Living Environment.

This strategy and accompanying action plan aim to address these local challenges and tackle the pockets of deprivation that exist. This will be achieved through our practices as an employer and working with contractors and partners. The strategy outlines the objectives the Councils aim to achieve to increase the delivery of social value and maximise the positive impact of our activities across both boroughs.

This strategy positions social value as a means by which specific local needs can be addressed. We have identified the following social, economic, and environmental challenges which social value provides opportunity to remediate.

Social

This strategy is a key document supporting the achievement of our shared strategic goal of creating more inclusive boroughs. Currently, there is an eight-year life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived areas of Guildford and Waverley, demonstrating that socio-economic inequalities exist in both boroughs. By embedding a consistent and coordinated approach to social value, and by actively promoting opportunities for its delivery, we aim to address these inequalities and contribute to narrowing this gap.

We will work collaboratively with key partners to identify local needs and opportunities to deliver social value. Examples of potential initiatives include workshops on healthy cooking and nutrition, activities that encourage active lifestyles and programmes supporting mental wellbeing.

We also recognise the importance of creating opportunities for young people across Guildford and Waverley. Recent figures show that one in eight young people aged 16 to 24 in the UK are not in education, employment or training (NEET)¹. We are committed to helping reduce this within our boroughs. We understand that there are many reasons why a young person may be NEET. Our focus is on supporting those who are seeking pathways into education, employment or training and on opening up a wide range of opportunities for young people of all ages. By offering valuable experiences, such as placements, shadowing and skills development we aim to help young people build confidence and readiness for future opportunities.

To achieve this, we will work closely with local schools, colleges and the University of Surrey, alongside our contractors, partners and local organisations to deliver opportunities. We aim to strengthen local pathways, widen access and ultimately reduce the number of young people who are not engaged in education, employment or training.

Economic

As part of our shared strategic priorities to shape more prosperous and inclusive boroughs, we are committed to supporting residents to develop the skills they need to succeed in the workplace. Although Guildford and Waverley perform well overall in education, skills and training when compared with much of the country, targeting social value delivery to areas in need could provide a tangible and long-term reduction in inequality. The 2025 Indices of Deprivation highlighted that certain areas within Guildford and Waverley have significantly

¹ Office for National Statistics (2026) *Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), UK*. Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/bulletins/youngpeoplenotineducationemploymentortrainingneet/latest>

higher levels of need than others. In these areas of greater need, the proportion of residents aged 16 and over with no qualifications is markedly higher than the regional average, with some areas reaching levels that are double the average for Guildford and Waverley.

To address these disparities, we aim to deliver social value that will support local residents develop skills and training, and promote opportunities for employment, working with partners and contractors to achieve this. Through this, we aim to reduce inequalities, promote economic growth and encourage long term investment in our boroughs.

Environmental

The Councils are committed to being a more sustainable borough, aiming to be net zero councils by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality across Guildford and Waverley by 2050. Generating environmental social value through our activities and those of our contractors and partners we can work towards achieving these goals.

Both Councils declared climate emergencies in 2019, recognising that urgent action is required to reduce harmful emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Our boroughs are already experiencing these impacts first-hand. Guildford and Waverley have been affected by wildfires in recent years, including incidents at Whitmoor Common, north of Guildford between 2017 and 2020 and most recently south of Guildford in July and August 2025. Waverley has also faced repeated wildfires on Hankley Common and Frensham Common, which destroyed rare reptile habitats. Flooding has also presented a persistent risk. Guildford has a long history of flooding, particularly from the River Wey. In Godalming, regular flood events affect homes and infrastructure. These examples show the impacts climate change is already having, and why efforts to reduce our impact is paramount.

Total emissions from council operations in both Guildford and Waverley in 2024/25 were 10,163^{2e}, which is equivalent to the annual emissions from 6,192 petrol cars. This figure covers direct emissions from council operations, indirect emissions from energy purchases and emissions related to contractor operations and supplier value chains. Whilst we have made progress since declaring a climate emergency in 2019 there is still work to do to reduce emissions and to ensure both Councils reach net-zero status by 2030.

Acting now and maximising opportunities to reduce our impact on the environment allows us to limit future damage, protect our communities through building resilience, and reduce long-term costs. Delivering environmental social value through contract commitments can support us to reduce our impact on the environment and the impacts of climate change.

Benefits

Embedding social value into commissioning and procurement will require contractors and partners to actively support our strategic priorities and social value objectives. Where proportionate contracts will be expected to deliver social, economic, and environmental

benefits aligned with the Councils' strategic goals. Considering social value across all service areas, will maximise the impact we have on the local area. This strategy therefore provides the following benefits:

- **Value for money** – Applying social value in our investments will maximise the benefits that each pound we spend can generate for local residents. We will go beyond delivering contracted services to consider how we can deliver additional benefits with our investments to address the social, economic, and environmental needs present in our community.
- **Real benefits for local community, economy and environment** – This strategy seeks to enrich both boroughs with tangible improvements to the local community, economy and environment. In making our objectives clear to contractors, this strategy will allow for targeted interventions which produce real, long-lasting benefits for our residents and the local area.
- **Support the priorities within both Councils' corporate strategies** – In aligning social value with our corporate strategy, we will enhance our capacity to leverage our spending power to shape a more prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable future for the boroughs of Guildford and Waverley.

Case studies

Smith and Byford SATRO work placement – Waverley 2025

In summer 2025, Smith and Byford, Waverley Borough Council's heating contractor, delivered two virtual research work placements for school aged students, in partnership with SATRO.

SATRO is a Surrey based education charity that works with schools, employers and local authorities to inspire young people and connect them with meaningful STEM focussed career opportunities.

During the research placements, students were set a research challenge titled "The Future of Home Heating", asking them to explore what could replace gas boilers. They were asked to research existing and emerging low carbon technologies, assess benefits and challenges and develop and present a new idea or concept of their own.

Smith and Byford and SATRO provided the students with guidance and support throughout the project. Following the completion of the research challenge the students presented their work in front of colleagues from Smith and Byford, SATRO, Waverley Borough Council and a representative from the Department for Energy, Security and Net Zero.

Following the placements the students were provided with feedback on their project, connected with on LinkedIn to support their early professional networks and offered future in person work placement opportunities.

Ash Road Bridge – Volker Fitzpatrick – Guildford 2025

The Ash Road Bridge scheme, was a major infrastructure initiative designed to replace the Ash level crossing with a new bridge. The bridge forms a critical component of Policy A31 in the Local Plan, supporting the delivery of over 1,750 new homes and addressing long-standing congestion and safety issues. The scheme delivered substantial social value to local people and economy.

A total of £17 million of social value was delivered. This included 29 local jobs created, £2.6 million spent with local businesses, and targeted support for young people. Volker Fitzpatrick delivered 198 hours in student outreach through attending career fairs, school and college events, and enabling site visits and workshops. Work experience was also provided for two Ash Manor school students, aiding local access to careers in the construction industry.

Volker Fitzpatrick's social value commitments were also able to generate community benefits. Providing funding for a youth worker, Volker Fitzpatrick will support the reopening of a youth club. Additional support included donations of white goods and essentials to vulnerable families. Beyond this, community engagement was central to the project, including public involvement in naming the bridge.

The delivery of this project also had positive environmental impacts, reducing congestion and emissions and using low carbon materials and efficient construction methods to build the bridge.



Roles and responsibilities

The Joint Leadership Team, Executive and Management teams

Accountable for considering and embedding social value into strategic decisions and actively promoting its importance across all services and teams.

Joint Social Value and Partnerships Lead

To lead the coordination, monitoring, delivery and reporting of social value across both Councils, ensuring compliance with legislation, alignment with the Councils' Corporate Strategies, and achievement of wider community benefits. Work closely with contractors to

ensure social value commitments are being delivered. Work with partners across the boroughs to realise opportunities for social value.

Social Value Steering Group

Support with the delivery of the social value action plan, ensuring commitments are completed. The group will provide a forum to share best practice, discuss implementation challenges, and support continuous improvement. Promote social value in their respective service area and champion opportunities to embed it more effectively across both councils.

Procurement team

Play a key role in implementing social value mechanisms into the procurement process. To work with contract managers and provide guidance throughout the procurement process, ensuring opportunities for social value delivery are identified.

Contract managers

Work closely with contractors during the procurement process and throughout the lifespan of the contract to ensure contractual social value commitments are being delivered. Be responsible for monitoring and reporting social value.

All Council Staff

It is the responsibility of all council staff to ensure they consider social value throughout their roles and that they work with businesses, the voluntary sector and communities to maximise opportunities to deliver it.

The action plan that accompanies this strategy sets out the specific actions that need to be delivered to ensure social value is embedded across the councils. The directorate responsible for each action is clearly identified within the plan.

Looking to the future

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Surrey will be the most significant reform in over 50 years. The government has confirmed a shift from the current two-tier system of 11 District and Borough Councils plus the County Council. From April 2027, these councils will be replaced by two new unitary authorities: West Surrey Council and East Surrey Council.

Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council will form part of West Surrey Council. The new unitary authority will continue to provide services that the District and Borough Councils currently deliver for residents, businesses and communities, such as waste collection, planning, council housing, leisure centres and parks and countryside, as well as those currently provided by Surrey County Council.

This strategy aims to ensure that Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council deliver strong social value outcomes during the transition period, while also positioning both Councils effectively for integration into the new unitary structure.

LGR will be considered when implementing the strategy and action plan, to support alignment with approaches for the post LGR-landscape.

Both Councils are actively preparing for LGR, and this strategy forms an important part of that work. Not only does it enable us to maximise social value while Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council remain sovereign authorities, but by establishing a shared framework now which is already adopted across two of the councils entering West Surrey Council, we create a strong foundation for what social value could look like within the new authority. This will help ensure that the distinct needs and priorities of Guildford and Waverley's communities are recognised, reflected, and carried forward as social value practice evolves under the new authority.