

Surrey Heath Borough Council
Council
5 April 2023

Fairtrade Status

Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Shaun Garrett – Economic Development and Transformation
Strategic Director/Head of Service	Bob Watson – Strategic Director
Report Authors:	Bob Watson – Strategic Director, Rachael Bradbury – National Management Trainee Simon Cockcroft – Economic Development Apprentice
Key Decision:	Yes
Date Portfolio Holder signed off the report	2 March 2023
Wards Affected:	All

Summary and purpose

This report presents the context and detail on the motion passed at Full Council in April 2022 for Surrey Heath Borough Council to apply for Fairtrade status by March 2023.

It outlines the five goals required to be achieved prior to application for Fairtrade Borough status, the actions and potential costs required to meet each of these goals, the issues with meeting the March 2023 timescale and the resources required.

The original proposer of the motion has been consulted about this paper and remains of the view that the financial aspects within this report are not required to comply with the motion. In addition, the proposer is of the view that expenditure of public monies at the levels referred to within the Option A proposal would not be justified and also agrees that it would not be possible for the Council to comply with the timeframes identified within the original wording.

Following discussion and a joint meeting between the Strategic Director and the proposer of the original motion, Option C is now being put forward as a possible way for the Council to proceed.

For ease of reference, the motion passed by Council in April 2022 is attached at Appendix 1.

Recommendation

The Council is asked to consider the options in **Section 3** of this report and determine how it wishes to proceed with the motion previously moved.

1. Background and Supporting Information

- 1.1. Fairtrade is an arrangement designed to help producers in growing countries achieve sustainable and equitable trade relationships. The Fairtrade movement combines the payment of higher prices to exporters with improved social and environmental standards.
- 1.2. Achieving Fairtrade status means any community that supports Fairtrade and understands the benefits Fairtrade brings; takes action by choosing Fairtrade products wherever possible and encourages others to do likewise; and achieves and continues to take action on the Fairtrade goals set by the Fairtrade Foundation.
- 1.3. Any defined geographical area can apply for Fairtrade status, be that Town, City, Village, Island, Borough, County or Zone.
- 1.4. Each Fairtrade status campaign is unique and the way in which Fairtrade status is achieved will be different for every community, but there are five goals which need to be met in order to achieve and maintain Fairtrade status.
- 1.5. The goals are designed to ensure as many people as possible can get involved, as a Fairtrade Town needs everyone to play their part – from the local authority, to cafés, businesses to schools, local newspapers to community groups.

2. Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1. In April 2022, the Council passed a motion that a formal application for Fairtrade status be submitted for the Borough of Surrey Heath by no later than 31 March 2023.
- 2.2. The Fairtrade Foundation advises it typically takes a year to meet the five goals and be in a position to apply for official Fairtrade status. There is also a cost associated with committing to Fairtrade status, due to the financial implications of supplying Fairtrade goods in Council offices, and running Fairtrade events and campaigns throughout the year. There would also be increased cost implications for those businesses choosing to sell Fairtrade products within the Borough. The Council would also need to commit to additional resources as set out the in section 5 (resource implications).

3. Options

3.1. It is considered that the motion should be reviewed with a view to agreeing to follow one of the following three options, which are:

Option	Summary	Cost estimate
A	Continue to seek Fairtrade Borough status in accordance with the motion.	£21,000 one-off £16,500 ongoing
B	Reject the motion.	No cost except 'sunk cost' of officer time
C	Continue with the broad spirit of the motion but in a way that does not incur significant additional cost to the Council.	Minimal, but with an opportunity cost of officer and Councillor time

A. Progressing the application for Fairtrade Borough status

3.2. The Council could choose to support the proposal to apply for Fairtrade status and incur the additional expenditure. Progressing the application for Fairtrade status would require the Council to:

- i. amend the original motion to instead suggest that an application for Fairtrade status be submitted by no later than December 2023. While the original motion had indicated limited resource would be required to achieve Fairtrade status, further research and advice from the Fairtrade Foundation has shown it takes at least one year and significant resource to achieve the five Fairtrade goals and be in a position to apply for Fairtrade Borough status.
- ii. approve **£21,500** of additional funding to be allocated to this programme of work, to help secure the five Fairtrade status goals by the aforementioned December 2023 deadline. This resource would cover the recruitment of a 0.5 FTE Fairtrade Officer at grade 5 for twelve months (inclusive of on-costs), who would work within the Economic Development team to pursue the five Fairtrade goals.
- iii. In addition to the above, approve additional on-going annual expenditure of up to **£15,000** added to the Council's base budget, to support the delivery of Fairtrade events and campaigns throughout each year, as outlined in goal three of the Fairtrade status goals and additionally approve further funding of **£1,500** per annum to allow for events and promotions specifically during Fairtrade Fortnight.

3.3. The table below outlines the goals required to be achieved prior to a Fairtrade status application, the actions required to achieve each goal and the considerations or resource implications for each goal, along with estimated timescales.

	Goal	Actions	Considerations	Timescales
1	Local council passes a resolution supporting Fairtrade, and agrees to serve Fairtrade products (for example, in meetings, offices and canteens).	<p>Run an inventory of all goods used within Surrey Heath House (such as tea and coffee used for meetings, cleaning supplies, stationary) and other Council run office spaces within the Borough to discover which goods can be replaced with a Fairtrade alternative.</p> <p>Contact suppliers to discuss switching to Fairtrade goods.</p> <p>Add guidance to the Council's procurement strategy involving prioritising Fairtrade products and Fairtrade certified local suppliers.</p> <p>Apply for a Fairtrade Workplace of World Changes certificate once requirements have been met for Surrey Heath House.</p>	<p>The Council has already declared Fairtrade as an important value within its community and that it should take positive action to achieving Fairtrade status across the Borough.</p> <p>Using Fairtrade products in the Council offices may have an increased cost attached.</p>	<p>1 month for an inventory to be run within Surrey Heath House on the goods available.</p> <p>1 month for alternative Fairtrade goods to be sourced and supplied to Surrey Heath House.</p> <p>1-2 months for guidance to be added to the Councils' procurement strategy.</p> <p>Goal 1 aim of completion June – July 2023</p>
2	A range of (at least two) Fairtrade products are readily available in the area's	Run a survey with local businesses in the Borough to gain data on the Fairtrade goods already offered by	Running a survey will have a resource implication for the Council.	1-2 weeks for a survey of local businesses to gather data on Fairtrade goods available within

	<p>retail outlets (shops, supermarkets, newsagents, petrol stations) and served in local catering outlets (cafés, restaurants, pubs).</p>	<p>retail shops and catering outlets.</p> <p>Encourage local businesses to partner with the Fairtrade Foundation UK through promotional campaigns.</p>		<p>retail stores and catering outlets.</p> <p>6 months to ensure Fairtrade products are readily available in retail and catering outlets.</p> <p>Goal 2 aim of completion August 2023.</p>
3	<p>Local workplaces and community organisations (places of worship, schools, universities, colleges and other community organisations) support Fairtrade and use Fairtrade products whenever possible. Populations over 100,000 will also need a flagship employer.</p>	<p>Encourage workplaces to gain a Fairtrade Workplace of World Changes certificate.</p> <p>Open up discussions with community organisations about supporting Fairtrade and using Fairtrade products wherever possible.</p>	<p>Flagship employer would be Surrey Heath Borough Council.</p>	<p>3-6 months to open up discussions with community organisations and Fairtrade goods to be sourced and supplied to these organisations.</p> <p>Goal 3 aim of completion August – September 2023.</p>
4	<p>Media coverage and events raise awareness and understanding of Fairtrade across the community.</p>	<p>Press releases to notify the community of the Council's commitment to becoming a Fairtrade Borough.</p> <p>Send out promotional pieces on significant events reached throughout the process.</p> <p>Plan events with a Fairtrade theme/encourage</p>	<p>Ongoing goal – it is recommended by the Fairtrade Foundation that evidence is provided over a one-year time period outlining the work done in this area.</p>	<p>1 year is the suggested amount of time for public events and articles about Fairtrade status to occur and be recorded as evidence for the Fairtrade application.</p> <p>Goal 4 ongoing to October – December 2023</p>

		Fairtrade goods to be used within events.		
5	A local Fairtrade steering group is convened to ensure the Fairtrade Town campaign continues to develop and gain new support.	<p>Look for individuals to join a local Fairtrade steering group who represent a range of local organisations and sectors.</p> <p>The Council to facilitate the meetings for the steering group.</p>	Ongoing goal - the Fairtrade Foundation suggests the steering group meets regularly over a time period of one year before we can be seen as having achieved this goal.	<p>1-2 months to open up discussions with individuals representing a range of local organisation and business sectors and form a local Fairtrade steering group.</p> <p>Goal 5 ongoing to October – December 2023</p>

B. Not progressing the application.

- 3.4. Alternatively, the Council could choose not to pursue Fairtrade status and reconsider the motion put forward in April 2022.

C. Not progressing the application for Fairtrade Status, but adopt the broad principles of Fairtrade.

- 3.5. An alternative option is for the Council to reconsider pursuing formal Fairtrade status at the current time. Research and an internal review of available resources has shown the Council will not be successful in achieving Fairtrade status if it submits an application in March 2023, due to the significant resource need and financial implications of pursuing each of the Fairtrade status goals listed above.
- 3.6. Possible suggestions for proceeding with the motion at minimal cost are to adopt its principles where possible. Details of ways to comply with the motion are set out below.
- 3.7. **“that the Council believes Fairtrade is an important value within its community and that it should take positive action towards achieving Fairtrade status across the Borough;”**
- 3.7.1. A statement to advertise this motion was passed has already been done by the Council’s Communications Team just after the Council motion was passed.
- 3.7.2. Fairtrade status has now been included as a quality criterion in the Council’s revised Procurement Strategy.

3.7.3. Fairtrade is included in the Council's Economic Development Strategy (as drafted) and the Council's Annual Plan.

3.8. **“supports Fairtrade and serves Fairtrade products wherever possible and practical at Council events, meetings and within Council buildings”**

3.8.1. There will need to be an audit as to which Fairtrade products are currently being used within the Council.

3.8.2. Services need to confirm which, if any, Fairtrade products are currently being used for events, meetings and in Council buildings. Examples could be:

- Drinks and food at in Camberley Theatre
- Cleaning products used with Council premises
- Products used in our community centres
- Drinks and food in the member facilities
- Refreshments provided at civic functions

3.8.3. A general list of Fairtrade items (not individual items) should be provided to all services for them to consider whether it is possible or practical to use Fairtrade products instead of current one.

3.8.4. Where this is not possible, either because there is no Fairtrade option or it is impractical due to the Council already being contractually committed to purchasing within a contract or there is an unreasonably excessive cost of Fairtrade compared with non-Fairtrade items, or storage issues or other good reason, then this would comply with the motion that was passed.

3.9. **“that awareness and understanding of Fairtrade be promoted across Surrey Heath using its Council communication channels and to highlight the Council's commitment to this principle;”**

3.9.1. This could be done

- via all staff emails and signature blocks
- via the internal staff intranet
- by our website
- by use of a regular marketing campaign
- by regular articles in Heathscene
- by seeking partners and interested parties/organisations to join a Steering Group
- by various partners doing the same with their own communication channels and maintaining this on a regular basis

3.10. **“that a local Fairtrade steering group be established including representatives from this Council, local business, education, relevant**

community groups and the faith community to develop a Fairtrade campaign and action plan for Fairtrade status;”

3.10.1. In order to achieve this it would mean holding a meeting or event at which all the other partners are invited. This would be run and hosted by the Council and Fairtrade products would be available. Potentially a speaker from the Fairtrade Foundation should be invited and possibly a speaker from a Council that has already achieved Fairtrade status.

3.10.2. Potential representatives should be from:

- The Council – one Cllr (appointed) and one officer
- Local Businesses to include but not limited to:
 - Collectively Camberley Limited (BID)
 - Yorktown Business Association
 - Lightwater and Frimley Business Association
- Education sector – Representatives from local school federation or PTAs
- Relevant community groups – This would include environmental groups and political parties, Voluntary Services, charities
- Parish Councils – Cllrs may have knowledge themselves
- Faith community – The Council already has these connections through churches, Sikh Association, Faith Forum, Islamic Centre

3.10.3. It would be the Steering Group and NOT the Council that act as the drivers for this work. They are the ones that link through their own organisations and then come together to share best practice and examples.

3.10.4. The Steering Group should also be the group that coordinates the larger campaign events such as Fairtrade awareness week and the staffing of stalls at various events.

3.11. that the application for formal Fairtrade status be submitted for the Borough of Surrey Heath by no later than 31 March 2023.

3.11.1. This can only be done at the end of the process once the rest has happened. The date was originally chosen because the process takes at least a year assuming that the actions are undertaken almost immediately the motion was passed. The deadline was initially set to ensure there was some degree of urgency and momentum to the Fairtrade initiative.

3.11.2. It should be recognised that the date in the original motion is unlikely to be achieved due to either the lack of a budget request in the original motion to support work as outlined in **Option A** and the limited work in support of the low cost option of **Option C**.

- 3.11.3. It is therefore suggested that if **Option C** is followed, then Council be asked to amend the final wording in the motion by removing the words: “by no later than 31 March 2023” and replacing them with “in due course with the Executive asked to consider short progress reports on a six-monthly basis”. This wording has been suggested by the Councillor who proposed the original motion.
- 3.12. Further actions if Option C is selected. The Steering Group would then address the following:
- 3.12.1. Contact businesses and employers and do an audit on those that already sell Fairtrade products and what products they offer. This should be done via the existing business networks that are already in place. The group would need to elect a Chair and Secretary who would receive the info.
- 3.12.2. Councillors can promote fairtrade within their own wards by visiting their local shops and community venues. (Some wards would be more difficult) We already have identified both Co-op and Tesco as Fairtrade champions and the other large supermarkets also operate fairtrade products. Business forums will also be aware of Fairtrade.
- 3.12.3. Contact local schools.
- 3.12.4. Set up Fairtrade webpage. This should not require any additional paid Council resource to do this, but may need to be hosted on the Council’s website – or linked to it.
- 3.12.5. Community groups already run numerous events and set up projects without need.
- 3.12.6. Flagship employer does not need to be the Council – could be Frimley Park Hospital, large private sector.
- 3.12.7. Duke of Edinburgh scheme.
- 3.13. In the event that a Steering Group could not be set up in accordance with this motion or that there is no realistic prospect of sufficient evidence being gathered by the Steering Group to submit to the Fairtrade Foundation, then the Council may need to reconsider the progress and likelihood of a successful application; this would be notified in the next six-monthly report to Executive. In these circumstances, the Executive would need to consider referring the motion back to Council to consider amending to state “that the Council would actively promote Fairtrade within the Borough and whilst continuing to set our own example where possible and practical it would not continue with a formal application for Fairtrade status”.

4. Contribution to the Council’s Five Year Strategy

- 4.1. The plans to become a Fairtrade Borough align with the Council's Five Year Strategy priorities.
- 4.2. Fairtrade has positive impacts on the environment, the health and quality of life of communities and the economy.
- 4.3. Fairtrade has been added to the annual plan for the Council.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1. For each of the goals outlined by the Fairtrade Foundation, additional resource would need to be allocated to the Council, to ensure the goals could be achieved within the set timescales.

Option A

- 5.2. The recruitment of a part-time grade 5 Fairtrade Officer, based within the Economic Development team, would have a financial implication of £21,500 inclusive of on-costs.
- 5.3. There is also a financial implication of supplying Council offices with Fairtrade goods, hosting and promoting Fairtrade events during Fairtrade Fortnight, as well as events to raise awareness of Fairtrade within Surrey Heath across the year. Costs to be fully established whilst undertaking goal one but could be up to £16,500.
- 5.4. Internal communications resource would also be required to support the delivery of this programme of work.

Option B

- 5.5. Nil further cost.

Option C

- 5.6. The costs are likely to be minimal to the Council as most of the activity would be carried out by the Steering Group and supported by Councillors. Some officer resource would be needed for administrative tasks, but this could be covered by temporary casual officers at a small cost.

6. Section 151 Officer Comments:

- 6.1. The original presumption by Councillors that the move to Fairtrade status within the specified timescale now seems to be erroneous following the extensive research carried out by the Council's economic development team in preparing this report. Even to date there has been an opportunity cost of officers being diverted from other tasks to focus on this piece of work.
- 6.2. Any actual and opportunity costs should be fully considered by Council when considering 'Motions to Council' and if in doubt professional advice sought prior to any motion being submitted.

7. Legal and Governance Issues

- 7.1. Depending on implementation and adopted practices, officers will consider what, if any, policies and structures are required to give effect to Fairtrade status.

8. Monitoring Officer Comments:

- 8.1. The Monitoring Officer has no further comments to include in this report.

9. Other Considerations and Impacts

Environment and Climate Change

- 9.1. Fairtrade helps farmers adapt, mitigate and become more resilient to climate change, whilst simultaneously giving consumers, retailers and traders the opportunity to reduce their carbon footprint and be part of a more sustainable supply chain.
- 9.2. Farmers, producers and workers can spend the Fairtrade Premium (the extra money they get from sales of Fairtrade certified crops and products), on projects such as tree planting, irrigation, crop diversification and clean energy, which are more sustainable on a local level but also contribute to the global fight against climate change.

Equalities and Human Rights

- 9.3. Fairtrade by its nature works to empower farmers and workers, foster responsible business conduct and spur policy reforms that protect human rights in global supply chains.

Risk Management

- 9.4. A primary risk is inadvertently forcing local businesses into using higher cost Fairtrade goods during the cost-of-living crisis. A communication plan can assist with negating this risk and assuring local businesses of our intentions.

- 9.5. There is a strong risk that the Fairtrade status goals will not be met before the original application deadline of March 2023 due to resource availability. This risk can be reduced by allocating additional resource and allowing for an extension of the application submission date.

Community Engagement

- 9.6. A significant communication effort will be required to meet all of the Fairtrade status goals, but particularly for goal four, to ensure residents are aware of the Council's commitment to applying for Fairtrade status for the Borough.
- 9.7. Some of the goals require the local community to show their support for Fairtrade and be involved in Fairtrade events. Community engagement will be key to the success of the campaign.
- 9.8. As part of goal four, media coverage is to be utilised for raising awareness and understanding of Fairtrade within communities. By engaging with local services such as radio stations and newspapers, more residents can be reached.

April 2022 – Full Council unanimously passed this motion

RESOLVED

- (i) to note**
 - a. that since 2001, over 600 communities across the UK have secured Fairtrade status;**
 - b. that Surrey County Council achieved Fairtrade status in September 2015 and that Rushmoor, Guildford and Addlestone also have Fairtrade status within its vicinity;**
 - c. the principles of an area with Fairtrade status namely any community that:**
 - supports Fairtrade and deepens understanding of the benefits that Fairtrade brings;**
 - takes action by choosing Fairtrade products whenever possible and encourages others to do likewise;**
 - achieves and continues to take action on the five Fairtrade goals set by the Fairtrade Foundation;**
- (ii) that the Council believes Fairtrade is an important value within its community and that it should take positive action towards achieving Fairtrade status across the Borough;**
- (iii) supports Fairtrade and serve Fairtrade products wherever possible and practical at Council events, meetings and within Council buildings;**
- (iv) that awareness and understanding of Fairtrade be promoted across Surrey Heath using its Council communication channels and to highlight the Council's commitment to this principle;**
- (v) that a local Fairtrade steering group be established including representatives from this Council, local business, education, relevant community groups and the faith community to develop a Fairtrade campaign and action plan for Fairtrade status; and**
- (vi) that the application for formal Fairtrade status be submitted for the Borough of Surrey Heath by no later than 31 March 2023.**