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NOTICE OF MEETING

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY PANEL**

05 OCTOBER 2010

**TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL**

You are requested to attend a meeting of the above Panel on **05 October 2010 at 7.30 pm** in the Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House, Bracknell, to transact the business set out in the attached agenda.

Alison Sanders
Director of Corporate Services

Members of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Finnie (Chairman)
Councillor McLean (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors Mrs Barnard, Beadsley, Bowers, Finch, Mrs Fleming, Leake and Mrs McCracken

Substitute Members of the Panel

Councillors Mrs Angell, Mrs Beadsley, Brossard, Harrison, Mrs Shillcock, Thompson and Turrell

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THE ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
05 October 2010 (7.30 pm)
Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House, Bracknell.

AGENDA

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|--|----------------|
| 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS
To receive apologies for absence and to note the attendance of any substitute members. | |
| 2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 22 June 2010. | 1 - 6 |
| 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP
Members are asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interest and the nature of that interest, including the existence and nature of the party whip, in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting. | |
| 4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS
Any other items which, pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman decides are urgent. | |
| <u>PERFORMANCE MONITORING</u> | |
| 5. PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT
To consider the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the Performance Monitoring Report for the first quarter of 2010/11 (April to June) relating to the Environment, Culture and Communities Department. An overview of the second quarter will also be provided.

Please bring the previously circulated Performance Monitoring Report to the meeting. Copies are available on request and attached to this agenda if viewed online. | 7 - 114 |
| 6. REPORT OF THE INSPECTION OF THE HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFITS SERVICE
The outcome of the inspection of the Housing and Council Tax Benefits service is attached for consideration. | 115 - 144 |
| 7. RE3 UPDATE AND RECYCLING FIGURES
To receive an update in respect of the re3 waste disposal contract and recycling figures. | 145 - 148 |

OVERVIEW AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

8. **PLANNING POLICY UPDATE FOLLOWING THE REVOCATION OF REGIONAL STRATEGIES** 149 - 154
An update in respect of new planning policy is attached.
9. **WORKING GROUP UPDATE REPORT** 155 - 156
An update report in respect of the Working Group of the Panel reviewing highway maintenance and the Member Reference Group considering commercial sponsorship is attached.
10. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BI-ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT** 157 - 168
To note the bi-annual progress report of the Assistant Chief Executive.
11. **WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12** 169 - 170
Members are invited to suggest possible items for inclusion in the Panel's draft indicative Work Programme for 2011/12.

HOLDING THE EXECUTIVE TO ACCOUNT

12. **EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN** 171 - 176
To consider forthcoming items on the Executive Forward Plan relating to environment, culture and communities.

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**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
PANEL
22 JUNE 2010
7.30 - 8.31 PM**



Present:

Councillors Beadsley, Bowers, Finch, Finnie, Mrs Fleming, Brossard, Mrs Shillcock and Thompson

Executive Members:

Councillors Mrs Ballin and Mrs Hayes

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Barnard, Leake, Mrs McCracken and McLean

Also Present:

Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview and Scrutiny
Jane Eaton, Head of Environmental Services
Simon Hendey, Chief Officer Housing
Bev Hindle, Chief Officer: Planning and Transport
Steve Loudoun, Chief Officer: Environment & Public Protection
Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture and Communities
Emma Silverton, Democratic Service Officer

60. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Finnie be elected Chairman of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year 2010/11.

COUNCILLOR FINNIE IN THE CHAIR

61. Election of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor McLean be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year 2010/11.

62. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

The Panel noted the attendance of the following Substitute Members:

Councill Brossard for Councillor Mrs Barnard
Councillor Thompson for Councillor McLean

63. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 9 March 2010 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

There were no matters arising.

64. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest.

65. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

66. Performance Monitoring Report

The Director of Environment, Culture and Communities gave a presentation in respect of departmental performance with reference to the Performance Monitoring Report (PMR) for the 4th quarter of 2009/10 ending 31 March 2010. The presentation outlined the Department's revenue and finances as at March 2010. Staffing, key highlights, fees and charges and the forward look were also included.

It was reported that there was a £409,000 change in the Gross Revenue Budget. The Net Revenue Budget was £35,939,000 with major variances totalling £827,000 which included; the extra cost of the severe weather conditions experienced in January 2010, lower than expected waste payment fees, a change from revenue to capital of planned and highway maintenance revenue and building control and land charge ringfenced accounts operating at a surplus which was higher than predicted.

Capital finance as at March 2010 was £11,642.30 with an anticipated spend of 58.74%. Capital schemes identified for carry forwards included:

- South Hill Park Restoration Project
- Building maintenance
- Programme of Leisure S106 schemes (budget only)
- SPA Mitigation Strategy
- Help to Buy a Home (Enabling more affordable Housing)
- Bridge strengthening

The average vacancy factor for the Department was low at 11.60%; overall vacancies had increased by 16 in the quarter with Leisure and Culture accounting for 11 of the vacancies. The Panel noted that recruitment of some posts had been delayed by up to a month to contribute towards savings for the Department. Staff turnover was at 2.20% for the quarter which was lower than for the same period in 2009/10. Staff sickness for the quarter was 1.66 days which was lower than for the same period in 2009/10 and reflected active management. The Director noted that the amount this equated to in monetary terms would be reported at the next Panel meeting in October 2010.

It was reported that the Director had exercised his delegated authority in making a number of mid year changes to Fees and Charges which were:

- An increase in the cost of a Senior Persons Rails card from £6.00 to £6.90
- A reduction in the disabled railcard from £3.70 to £3.40
- A skip operator license fee charge of £60 to cover the administration costs of operating checks
- Changes in pre application charges;
 - a reduction in the cost of 1 dwelling from £260 to £130
 - reduction in up to 40sq m commercial miscellaneous from £260 to £50
 - reduction in 41sq m – 250 sq m commercial from £360 - £160

The Director highlighted key areas in the Department's forward look. It was noted that the Department was experiencing a period of change as a result of the new Government which included announcements for planning and further in-year savings amounting to £300,000 of Capital expenditure. The Housing and Planning Delivery Grant and the Supporting People Administration Grant amounting to £258,000 would no longer be received. The Panel noted that judging of Bracknell in Bloom would take place on 13 July. A mapping exercise of planning was underway to allow a root and branch assessment of the service.

Arising from Members' questions and comments the following points were noted:

- Officers across the council had made exceptional efforts to cope with the effects of the severe winter weather.
- The cost for refurbishment of Edgbarrow Sports Centre was covered by insurance. The insurance also covered loss of revenue incurred during the period the centre was closed.
- The Council's mortgage scheme for shared ownership was launched in June. 1 application had been received to date.
- There was no cap relating to the value of a home for the mortgage scheme, however there was a minimum and maximum % of ownership shares allowed by an individual applying for the scheme.
- Forest care was still working on the upgrade to PNC6 which would be completed in the quarter. PNC6 referred to the version of the Tunstall Lifeline Monitoring system which was used.

The Panel congratulated officers and the Director on their successful work undertaken across a wide array of functions.

67. **Supporting People Working Group Update Report**

The Panel received from Councillor Mrs Shillcock, lead member, the Supporting People Programme Update report undertaken by a working group of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

The Supporting People programme was a Government funded initiative which required local authorities to provide housing related support, enabling people with specified and assessed need to live independently in their own accommodation. The funding was ringfenced until April 2009, from April 2010 the funding had been included in the Area Based Grant, and had reduced each year by approximately 12%.

A House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee was established to look into the delivery of the Supporting People programme and expressed strong support for the programme which had proved to be extremely good value for money, providing low level and joined up support to retain people's independence or help people to move out into more independent lives. The Working Group concurred with this view.

The Supporting People service in Bracknell Forest had received a poor inspection in 2005, however the team had now made steady progress with the Audit Commission satisfied with progress made. The Working Group had received positive feedback from people who used the service and concluded that good progress had been made in the Supporting People Team with the service now well embedded.

RESOLVED that the report of the Supporting People Programme Update report, be agreed and commended to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission for adoption and for sending formally to the relevant Executive Member.

68. **Council Tax and Housing Benefits Working Group Report**

The Panel received from Councillor Finch, lead member, the review of the Council's Housing and Council Tax Benefits Improvement Plan report undertaken by a working group of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

The report provided further monitoring of the Benefits Service following on from the Housing and Council Tax Benefits Improvement Plan, June 2009.

RESOLVED that;

- a) the conclusion of the Working Group's review of the Housing and Council Tax Benefits Improvement Plan be noted;
- b) the Working Group's work was now concluded;
- c) the report of the Housing and Council Tax Benefits inspection be brought to the Panel's meeting in October 2010;
- d) the report be commended to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission for its consideration;
- e) the Panel invite the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to consider reviewing the progress on procuring and implementing the new IT system for Benefits administration.

69. **Severe Weather Working Group Report**

The Panel received the Severe Weather report undertaken by a working group of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

The working group had met on several occasions and spoken to a number of Council staff and contractors to understand how the severe weather had affected service areas from across the Council.

Arising from Members' questions and comments the following points were noted:

- That a recommendation be added to the report suggesting that officers look at the possibility of contracts with local plant hires and businesses who had equipment that may be of use during severe weather, to allow access to greater resources during future severe weather events.
- Staff across the departments had worked well and put in extra effort to ensure service delivery where possible during the severe weather. Overall Bracknell Forest Council had coped well during the severe weather. It was agreed that this would be reflected in the conclusion of the working group report.
- Some schools had used a text messaging service to keep parents informed of decisions to open and close the school for the day which had proved successful. It was agreed that recommendation 6.7 of the report would be expanded to include the use of text messaging.

RESOLVED that the report of the Severe Weather report with amendments, be agreed and commended to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission for adoption and for sending formally to the Executive.

70. **"Be Prepared" - Report on Preparedness for Public Health Emergencies**

The Panel received a report by a working group of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel which reviewed the preparedness of the Council and its partners for public health emergencies which was timely as it coincided with the outbreak of Swine Influenza A/H1N1 (Swine Flu).

The Working Group found that the arrangements in place to prepare for a public health emergency were sound and effective. The report had been agreed by the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel subject to two adjustments to recommendations as set out in the supplementary paper circulated to the Panel.

The Panel noted the 'Be Prepared' review of preparedness for public health emergencies with adjusted recommendations, undertaken by a working group of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

The Panel noted that there had been four working group reports on the agenda which reflected the good work and effectiveness of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Chairman thanked Members of the Panel who had participated in the working groups.

71. **Executive Forward Plan**

The Executive Forward Plan items relating to Environment, Culture and Communities were noted.

The Panel noted that officers were waiting for direction from Government on whether or not to take forward the current Local Development Framework Site Allocations Development Plan. Although there was currently uncertainty in planning it was likely that the Warfield Supplementary Planning Document would continue to be progressed as scheduled in the Executive Forward Plan. The Panel noted that the planning department were keen to receive direction from Government on the way forward.

CHAIRMAN

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Performance Monitoring Report

Environment, Culture & Communities

First Quarter 2010/11

April - June 2010

Portfolio holders:

Councillor Mrs Mary Ballin

Councillor Dale Birch

Councillor Mrs Dorothy Hayes

Councillor Iain McCracken

Director: Vincent Paliczka

Section One: Executive Summary

The first quarter of the year has been incredibly variable with the usual requirement to deliver a wide range of services to a high quality, influenced by the impact and decisions of the new coalition Government.

Probably the most challenging decision by Government was its decision to announce its intentions to remove regional planning strategies from the planning framework as soon as possible but in any case local authorities should recognise this intent as a material consideration in their decision making process. For Bracknell Forest this meant that the additional 2,000 homes imposed as part of the South East Plan could be disregarded which was welcome news for the Council. However, an absence of effective guidance also meant that our work on our Site Allocations Development Plan Document, which was well advanced, had to be delayed which was disappointing given the amount of work taken to reach this but more importantly a delay in establishing the Council's housing plans until 2026. The Executive has, however, noted the draft conclusions reached by the Planning Policy Team.

The decision by Government to clawback significant money from area based grants has resulted in significant pressure across the Council and also within the department. Planning, Supporting People and Road Safety all had funding removed and decisions have been made about how to deal with this shortfall.

Meanwhile, the Department continues to provide a wide range of services within what remains a challenging economic environment. Income in our car parks and golf course continue to reduce although other trading areas appear to be just about stable. There is no doubt, however, that the public are being very focussed on what they spend scarce resources on. Probably related is the increased demand from homeless families but a positive note on this is the success of our homeless prevention team in having successful interventions in resolving these issues.

The small Trading Standards and Environmental Health teams have again proved their worth with the Trading Standards team identifying over 100 items in a major store which were beyond their 'use by date' – potentially a health risk to the public. Fly tipping is on the decrease which indicates higher community awareness in the negative impact on fly tipping and this is re-enforced too by increased enforcement by the Environmental Health team. Retaining a focus on environmental issues, the use of a felled tree to provide what we think is the longest picnic table in the UK at Lily Hill Park is an excellent initiative by the Bracknell Conservation Volunteers and the Council's work on climate change is showing fruit with energy consumption down last year by about 8%, resulting in a reduction of CO2 emissions by about 5%.

While there is always a lot to identify across the department, it is worth highlighting the excellent internal review being carried out by the Planning Service in terms of efficiency; the partial opening of Edgbarrow Sports Centre in April; the reduction in sickness across the department and unfortunately the resignation of Lynne Dick, Community Arts Development Officer.

This has been a very challenging quarter for the department, but I believe the report indicates that it has risen to the challenge well.

Section Two: Progress against Service Plan

Annex C provides details of performance against relevant National Indicators this quarter, as well as an update on the operational risks identified in the Service Plan. The Environment, Culture & Communities Service Plan for 2010/11 contains 61 detailed actions to be completed in support of the 13 Medium-Term Objectives. Annex C also provides information on progress against each of these detailed actions. Overall 58 actions of the 61 are on target at the end of Quarter 1 (✓). Three of the remaining actions are shown as “not applicable” at present. Action 1.6.12, preparing a development plan for the main library building is the responsibility of the Building Surveyors section in the Corporate Services Department. Action 4.7.2, a pilot scheme to switch off street lighting at specified times, the Director deferred until another year following the feasibility study. Action 4.8.3 is awaiting the final legislation before we can start the work.

Although we are showing action 3.4.3 as green at the moment we are a little uncertain as whether we can achieve this or not. Unfortunately the performance management system does not yet give us the flexibility to show this target as amber. Action 3.4.3 says we will complete preparing the Transport Asset Management Plan by 31 March 2011. We plan to put the work to our new Highways Consultancy Contractor. We are approaching the end of letting this contract through the Hampshire County Council framework agreement. This contract is due to go live on 1 September. Therefore, we are not clear whether this will allow our contractor time to complete the work by the year end as we had originally hoped.

Section Three: Resources

Staffing

Please see Annex A.

Revenue Budget Monitoring

The Committee's revenue budget for the year 2010/11 was set at £36,368,000. This is shown in more detail at Annex B Table 1, and also highlights the changes to the revenue budget in the period 1 April to 31 May, which increases the overall budget to £36,823,000. A summary of these changes are shown below.

	£000
Staffing Costs – As a result of reductions in staffing levels severance payments have been incurred which are to be funded from the Structural Changes Fund.	87
On/Off Street Parking – The transfer of the net income from Easthampstead House car parking to the office accommodation account is to be discontinued.	-5
On/Off Street Parking – A sum was carried forward from 2009/10 to complete maintenance works.	18
Bus Contracts – Budgets for the bus routes that are funded from Section 106 monies need to be transferred from this fund.	323
Parks, Open Spaces & Country side – Budgets for the staffing in relation to the management of SANGS need to be transferred from the Section 106 SPA mitigation monies.	16
Forest Care – A saving as a result of vehicle leasing costs has arisen which forms part of the Transport Review, is being transferred to Corporate Services.	-10
Departmental Support Services – A virement is required to fund the Programme and Project Manager post which is a fixed term contract.	45
Departmental Support Services – An administrative post is being transferred to Corporate Services.	-19
TOTAL	455

A fuller explanation of these changes is given in Appendix B Table 1.

Performance Against Approved Budget

There has been one variance of £94,000 in this period, a description of which is shown below:

	£000
Waste Management - Increase in business rates as a result of a revaluation following construction of Smallmead and Longshot Lane and additional inflation from 1 April 2010 budgeted at 2.5%, actual 5.4%.	94
TOTAL	94

Capital Budget Monitoring

The Committee's capital budget for the year was set at £9,920,000. This included £2,900,000 of externally funded schemes. A carry forward from 2009/2010 of £4,440,400, gives an available spend of £14,360,400.

The capital monitoring statement including performance against budget is shown in Appendix B Table 2.

Changes to Fees & Charges

The Director approved the following changes to the department's published fees and charges for 2010/11:

Cemetery & Crematorium

	Previous Fee	Revised Fee
Sanctum 2000® Cremated Remains (with flower holder)		
Prepare and display for 10 year period, an inscribed table for two sets of remains including 80 letters of inscription	970.70	995.00
Prepare and display for 20 year period, an inscribed table for two sets of remains including 80 letters of inscription	1,287.40	1,320.00
Prepare and display for 30 year period, an inscribed table for two sets of remains including 80 letters of inscription	1,583.75	1,625.00
Prepare and display for 50 year period, an inscribed table for two sets of remains including 80 letters of inscription	2,145.70	2,199.00

Concessionary Fares

Senior Persons Railcard	6.00	6.90
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Planning Pre-Application Enquiry Fees

Residential Development - Initial Fee (Per Site)		
I Home	260.00	130.00
Commercial Development (Including change of use) - Initial Fee (Per Site)		
Floor space less than 40 sq.m and miscellaneous matters not involving any floor space e.g. advertisements, shop fronts and other changes relating to external appearance.	360.00	50.00
40 -250 sq.m.	360.00	160.00
1001 -10,000 sq.m.	570.00	560.00

Bracknell Leisure Centre

Swimming per session		
Under 16 / 60+	Free	2.00
Swimming 6 months		
Under 16 / 60+	Free	94.50
Early Bird 3 months 60+	Free	43.00
Early Bird 6 months 60+	Free	65.00

The above swimming charges will be introduced with effect from 6th September 2010 when the current free swimming scheme for under 16's and over 60's is withdrawn in line with government policy.

Complaints received

Stage	No. rec'd Q1	Nature of complaints (bulleted list)	Action taken and lessons learned (bulleted list)
New Stage 2	2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> BFMy Choice issues on banding. BFMy Choice issues on banking 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings held and conversations continue Chief Executive in liaison with complainant providing clarification of banding process
New Stage 3	1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Dissatisfaction with refuse collection service 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Compromise reached and policy sent out.
New Stage 4	1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment cancellation issue 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Chief Executive in liaison with complainant
Ombudsman	2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Complaint about DFG Application (progression) Complaint against damage to a fence by operatives and subsequent burglary 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Director reviewed and complaint not upheld. Agreed referral to Ombudsman. Dismissed by Ombudsman

Explanation of new complaint stages

Stage 1: Informal notification to, and attempt at resolution with, the team providing the service in question.

Stage 2: More formal contact (in writing or by phone) with the manager or chief officer responsible for the service. Attempted resolution is by investigation and written response to the complainant.

Stage 3: Formal written complaint to the relevant director. Attempted resolution involves investigation by the director or appointee and written response to the complainant.

Stage 4: Formal written complaint to the Chief Executive, who decides whether the complaint has been dealt with appropriately at each of the previous stages. If not, a review panel consisting of two independent persons and a Council Member is convened, at which the complainant may be present. The panel makes recommendations to the Chief Executive on whether to uphold the complaint and what remedial action should be taken.

Local Government Ombudsman: If the complainant remains unsatisfied at the end of Stage 4, s/he may contact the Local Government Ombudsman, who will review the case and form a judgment as to whether the complaint should be upheld.

Internal audit assurances

2009/10 Audit Plan

The department received 13 final audit reports for the financial year 2009/10 in the quarter. The auditors gave 1 system a significant assurance opinion, 11 a satisfactory assurance and 1 a limited assurance. The audit containing a limited assurance recommendation focussed on two specific areas of the Highways/Ringways contract. The limited assurance recommendation was for the street cleansing service. The concern was inadequate contract monitoring of part of the street cleansing contract, including public toilets. The Chief Officer: Environment and Public Protection has reviewed the situation and has ensured improved contract monitoring now takes place.

2010/11 Audit Plan

The department received finalised audit from the 2010/11 Audit Plan in the quarter. This audit was of reconciliations between financial systems and received a satisfactory opinion.

Equality impact assessments

We published one equality impact assessment, for Development Management, during quarter one.

Section Four: Forward Look

ENVIRONMENT & PUBLIC PROTECTION

Emergency Planning & Business Continuity

The Rest Centre plan and resources are currently being reviewed; a number of additional rest managers are being trained. Due to the changes in the emergency contact officer arrangements more service area managers need to be trained to support an emergency response and an 'Introduction to Emergency Planning' training programme is being developed.

The corporate business continuity plan will be reviewed during this period including a reassessment of the business impact analysis process. The Corporate Severe Weather Plan will be progressed through the summer ready for consideration by the Executive in autumn.

The impact of the new legislation in respect of flooding is still expected to be clarified. The resource implications are likely to be significant and skill shortages are an issue nationally. The Flood Risk Regulations 2009 require an assessment of flood risk and a preliminary report to be completed by June 2011.

Environmental Health

The Health and Safety Law outturn report for 2009-10 and enforcement plan 2010-11 is to be presented to the Licensing & Safety Committee for adoption on 1 July 2010. The Food Law Outturn Report for 2009-10 and the Enforcement Plan 2010-11 is to be reported to the Executive Member for Leisure, Corporate Services and Public Protection for adoption on 26 July 2010 after which it will go to Council in September.

The strategy for improving existing housing stock was adopted on 16 March 2010. A key action for environmental health was to seek to introduce a landlord accreditation scheme. The purpose of the scheme is to recognise and reward landlords who manage their properties to a good standard. To test demand for a landlord accreditation scheme 108 questionnaires were sent to a range of stakeholders. The results indicate that of the 24 questionnaires returned (19%) none currently belongs to an accreditation scheme but all except 2 would consider joining a scheme run by the Council. The work in the next period will assess the viability for the introduction of a landlord accreditation scheme along with the resource implications.

The interim Environmental Protection Team Manager left the Council on 11 June and the permanent manager recruited earlier in the year is to start work in July. Meanwhile three expectant officers within the Environmental Protection Team are scheduled to begin maternity leave. Some cover is being achieved through the use of an agency officer and by reallocating work elsewhere in the section. The Commercial Team Manager remains on maternity leave and it is anticipated she will return at the end of September. The post will continue to be covered internally by a team member voluntarily acting up into the role.

Officers are to provide a foundation food hygiene course in Sandhurst School on 21 July aimed at young people who are likely to be looking for part time jobs or to start work for the first time. In addition support is to be given to the Junior Citizen's day event at Bracknell and Wokingham College, Wick Hill Centre on 13/14 July. We will be providing 10 minute interactive workshops in relation environmental health. It is anticipated that 400 children will participate in the events.

Environmental Services

The service intends to undertake "doorstepping" in areas where recycling performance is poor and landfill bin waste is high. This door to door awareness raising campaign will be accompanied by roadshows with waste team and re³ staff promoting home composting, real nappies, food waste reduction and educating residents about the correct materials they should place in their recycling bins. The work will be funded from a government grant. Areas targeted are Crown Wood, parts of Great Hollands and some parts of Warfield where a proportionally higher number of Acorn 3 (comfortably off) householders are located and it is hoped that this work will commence before the autumn.

Over 100 new litter bins made from recycled plastic are to be installed throughout the borough during July and August to replace those that are old and rusty. 20 dual "recycling on the go" bins will also be installed in the Town Centre and at Neighbourhood shops to try and capture the significant amount of cans and plastic bottles normally thrown in litter bins in these areas.

An analysis of street sweepings has indicated that over 80% of this is organic compostable material. Prior to sending it for composting it needs to be treated by removing litter and drying out the sweepings. Wokingham BC our re³ partner has successfully undertaken this process for some years and Bracknell Forest and Reading BC are planning to do the same thus diverting even more waste from landfill. Work is also planned to start the refurbishment of the public conveniences in the town at the Bus Station and Brooke House.

Investigations will continue to find a sensible solution to traffic management requirements on all de-restricted roads (50mph and above) working with Ringway the Highways contractor. Workers need to be protected if they are working less than 1.2 metres from high speed roads and there is a need to minimise potential damage claims for windscreens that have been hit by stones or other objects thrown up by mowers.

At the end of the quarter final preparations were being made for Britain in Bloom judging on 13 July attending to the route and dealing with any problems. Landscape management will be looking at more partnership working with Bracknell Forest Homes in joint areas of amenity land to achieve mutually beneficial efficiencies.

Highways Asset Management

Further highway re-surfacing programmes continue to be developed to enable works to commence on site later this year. These projects will be targeted at the remaining streets that were particularly badly affected by the last winter season. Bridge and highway structural strengthening and protection projects will be designed and site works programmes developed in co-operation with our new consultants and existing contractors.

Work will continue to collect and improve our asset inventory, looking this time to improve our understanding of the condition of the several elements of the network.

As previously reported this information is essential to inform our further valuations of the asset as the rules regarding valuation change in line with HM Treasury guidance on Whole of Government Accounts. In support of this process a programme of structural testing of street lighting columns will take place to assist us understand the general condition of the lighting stock and to target replacement programmes more effectively.

The group will continue to work with our current contractors to ensure a smooth transition from their current operational depot in Bagshot to sites within the Borough. The Bagshot depot, owned by Surrey County Council, will no longer be available to our contractors after April 2011, requiring a move to alternative operation sites within Bracknell.

Operational Support

We hope to undertake a review of our web pages and by so doing ensure that the information provided to the public and the access they have to our services is current and the web is available as an effective tool. Work will continue with the new Car Park contractors to provide a seamless handover of more of the back office systems and thereby release savings to the Council.

Trading Standards & Services

Over the next quarter officers will be conducting a series of test purchase operations to check local compliance with the sale of restricted age products such as alcohol and cigarettes. It is hoped that the good progress experienced last year with the reduction in sales will continue. Additionally we have intelligence that under 18's may be purchasing petrol to run mini bikes and motor bikes used for off road purposes, and we will therefore be speaking to retailers to reinforce the "do not sell message" and verifying compliance through a series of test purchases.

New legislation requiring an age 18 limit on sun bed use will come into force in 2011. Officers will be advising suppliers on checking regimes that should be in place to prevent use by under 18's.

Officers will also be working with officers from Revenue and Customs to look at the problems of counterfeit alcohol products that are appearing with regularity on the UK market. These products are often very poorly manufactured and can lead to serious health issues if consumed.

Licensing

The long summer evenings tend to be a period when the Council receives the greatest number of complaints from residents regarding disturbance from licensed premises. Partially this is due to open windows in residential properties and open doors and windows in the licensed property and partly due to people being outside and enjoying their leisure time. Most licensed premises have conditions attached to their licence requiring them to control noise and officers will be checking that where complaints have been received, they are operating within conditions and acting responsibly towards neighbours.

Officers will also be continuing joint work with Thames Valley Police in the areas of taxis and licensed premises

Car Parks

From 1 July a new contractor was appointed. New equipment will be installed within the car parks to monitor and control payment. Additionally provisions for the enforcement of on road parking have also passed to the new contractor.

Work will commence over the coming months on capital works identified to maintain the High Street and Charles Square car parks. Additionally work is being carried out to identify maintenance work necessary to other car park areas within the Borough.

Cemetery & Crematorium

The next quarter will see the works commence on the old chapel ready for the new cremators. This phase of works is to be completed along with office facilities in time for the installation of the new cremators which begins in the fourth quarter.

The replacement of bush roses will commence in the second quarter. Bush roses are often destroyed by wildlife and are to be replaced with standard roses. Customers who originally opted for bush roses were canvassed and 98% opted for the Standard rose as a replacement. New rose beds will be created as there is no room within existing beds. New plaques showing the new location of the rose and the name of the deceased to whom the rose is dedicated will be created on the new plaque engraving machine; this will represent a saving to the department as these were previously outsourced.

re³ Partnership

The overall recycling rate performance of the re³ project is proving challenging against the 40% target for this year. The fall in rates seen as part of the waste collection arrangements has a knock on effect when it comes to disposal. To try to recover this WRG are doing more work to try to extract more through the sorting process at Smallmead, in addition to continuing to develop the learning from the on site recycling trials.

The introduction of the height barrier at Smallmead has been a tremendous success when it comes to reducing the amount of trade waste going via the household facilities. The process being employed to manage this is however very resource demanding. Options are to be explored that could result in some changes to the arrangements for allowing vans to enter both Smallmead and Longshot. There may also need to be some minor changes to the entrances.

It is hoped that a long standing issue has also been resolved that allows West Berkshire residents to use Smallmead. In coming to this agreement West Berkshire Council will pay the associated costs of their residents using the site. It is now not uncommon for non residents to be barred from such sites unless specific arrangements have been made. Each year we survey both sites to monitor for non residents' use.

WRG are contracted to produce an annual report. This has been published and copies will be made available to all Members.

HOUSING

Housing strategy

The Council will launch the new equity share scheme (BFC Myhome choice) in early September. This scheme will enable first time buyers to buy a home of their choice by buying a share of the equity from the Council and renting what they cannot afford.

The second meeting of the programme board that is steering the older person accommodation and support services strategy will meet in July. The meeting will agree the consultation questions and methods and then the consultation will take place with older people, providers and market makers over the proceeding months.

Homelessness

A count of rough sleepers at hot spot areas will take place in August. The count will be undertaken by volunteers including the voluntary sector based on intelligence from the Police and other agencies where the hot spots for rough sleeping takes place. The count will be undertaken following guidelines from the Communities and Local Government department.

Supporting people

Negotiation with service providers has been concluded in the majority of cases to establish contract prices for the next three years for supporting people service providers. At the time of writing the contracts have not been entered into due to concerns over availability of funding although it is expected that the contracts will be in place by September. Services have been provided by extending the previous contracts.

The supporting people administration grant was withdrawn by Government as part of the decision to reduce grant funding to local authorities in May. The programme has to be administered to standards and requirements set down by the Communities and local government department and so it has been decided to establish a new post to administer the programme at a reduced level compared to the work of the previous two posts. The post will be funded from efficiency savings generated from the contract negotiation process.

Home ownership

The number of households who are taking up the option of a cash incentive grant is picking up and current projections are that 8 households will be helped to buy a home with this assistance in 2010/11.

Choice based letting – BFC My choice

The implementation of the BFC job search portal has been delayed to July. This is because the system has been bespoke written to include specific services in Bracknell rather than the implementation of the generic product. When in place the system will allow applicants to access employment and training opportunities.

Benefits

The result of the inspection of the benefit service by the Audit Commission will be published in the quarter. This will follow a round table meeting with the audit

commission and the Council where the recommendations and overall score will be discussed and challenged.

Along with the surgeries to improve benefit take up there will be two specific events in August. The annual benefit for you event will take place on the 19th August in Princess square and the benefit service will also attend an event of r over 50s.

The system replacement for the benefit service is progressing to plan. The second data cut has taken place to establish the match of data between old and new systems. The document management system has been upgraded.

There will be a benefit user focus group in the beginning of August.

Forest care

The new calls handling system separate from the lifeline monitoring system will go live in July. This will enable more accurate logging and management of calls such as out of hours calls and provide a better service to corporate customers.

A new contract with the new car park management company will be negotiated during the quarter to provide a mobile response out of hour's service.

Negotiation with the Radian Housing group is taking place to extend the calls handling service that we currently provide for Windsor housing.

LEISURE AND CULTURE

Parks and Countryside

Tree services

New measures are being put into place to deliver the Bracknell Forest Council Tree Policy and support managers to help them improve management of the Council's tree stock. This includes:-

- Tree safety survey of 31 Schools
- Tree safety survey of primary and secondary Highway routes
- Terms of Reference (Service agreement) with Highways Asset Management Group
- Terms of Reference (Service agreement) with Development Management
- Terms of Reference (Service agreement) with Leisure sites.

Biodiversity

The Bracknell Forest Biodiversity Forum will be undertaking two site visits linked to delivering the Biodiversity Action Plan. The visits are to a wildflower farm (habitat creation) and to Wildmoor Heath (Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area bird species).

Survey work will be undertaken for the rare round-leaved sundew and glow-worm, two Bracknell Biodiversity Action Plan species particular to the borough.

Marketing and interpretation

Newly designed interpretation and notice boards for Shepherd Meadows/ Sandhurst Memorial Park will be erected on site. The designs have undergone internal and external consultation with the Local Access Forum and BeHeard - the member-led group of disabled adults based in Bracknell.

A detailed review of all Parks and Countryside leaflets is being done to assess those that need redesigning and printing and those that only need to be available to download from the website.

Planning and strategic consultation

Jennetts Hill Park

The countryside park is currently being established by the Consortium's landscape consultants. The service is liaising closely to ensure that open space, play and games facilities of a high standard and lasting value to the community will be developed.

The service will be present at an open air community event on 8th August organised by the Jennetts Park Residents Association, with information about parks, countryside, rights and way and biodiversity and offering ranger guided walks of the new countryside park.

Wykery Copse

The service has been consulted on the proposals for the new landscaping of the development, protection and enhancement of the SSSI woodland.

Playbuilder

Year-two sites for Playbuilder projects have been identified following discussions with the Play Partnership (Parish, Town and Borough Councils). Play improvements are proposed for Savernake Park (Crown Wood, Winkfield) and the Greenway (College Town, Sandhurst)

A special event will be taking place on 4 August to increase the awareness of local children about the improved play provision in the Warfield area as delivered during year-one

Access Improvements

Access improvements are planned for early August at Queen Anne's Gulley. This is using locally constructed timber from the Crown Estate. Funding of 80% of the total cost has been secured from Natural England

Artist designed seating at Jubilee Gardens will be refurbished over the summer to improve this popular town centre park

New seating is also being placed at Bill Hill, made using wind blown timber from on site

Community Events

A 'Paws in the Park' public event is to be held at Lily Hill Park on 31 July to promote responsible dog ownership. On-hand expert advice, fun activities, competitions and demonstrations by local businesses and charities will all be taking place.

A Partners and Youth Scheme for 12-15 year olds in Birch Hill and Hanworth has been organised for July, August and September. Set up by the Neighbourhood Action Group, in partnership with the local Police and Parks and Countryside service, the initiative involves volunteer activities at South Hill Park leading to the reward of a free activity day at Oakwood Youth Challenge

Libraries, Arts and Heritage

As part of the Social Networking project, BFC Libraries will launch a Facebook account in July. Following major refurbishment, Whitegrove Library will re-open on 19th July. The author Iain Pattison will attend Bracknell Library Writers' Group in the autumn.

Northern Parishes Arts Week in October. Heritage Open Days in September.

PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES

Administration

The Document Management Team will shortly complete phase 2 of the planning back-scanning project and aim to complete the back-scanning of drainage plans before quarter-end. The 4th floor Admin Team will continue to provide support to the ranger service until a new administrator can be recruited at The Look Out. We will remove two large old lektreiver filing units from Time Square South following a clear-out of paper files.

Business Systems

We will upgrade M3, the IT system used by environmental health & trading standards. To tie in with the upgrade of the Corporate GIS upgrade, we will upgrade Uniform, the system used by development management and building control and implement the new version of Uniform Public Access. This will improve the customer experience when viewing and commenting on planning applications. It will also enable the public to setup alerts in the area where they live.

After delays in June due to technical issues, we will go live with Odyssey, a new call logging system for Forest care and BFC|my job search, a hosted website that will help people on the housing register to look for jobs, get help with training and advice on benefits.

We are part of the corporate web redevelopment project team. This is the start of a major piece of work that will take many months to complete. We will continue to create online forms with new corporate forms system and finish updating web pages with links to the Government's Electronic Licensing Management System. This enables the European Community to apply for licenses online. With the library service we hope to complete work on the new online catalogue system.

We will continue to work on the upgrade of the Council's GIS systems and hope by the end of the quarter to have upgraded the test system. We will continue to provide maps and mapping services to the department and the Council as a whole.

e+ Smartcard Programme

We will introduce the new cheaper DESFire card on 12th of July.

We plan to develop a use for the SNAPI application during this period. This is an application that uses the smartcard to identify to the computer that the user has special needs and modifies computer setting accordingly.

We will meet Experian to explore the cost and method of authenticating address and ID data for those enrolling for an e+ card.

We will publish the new Discount Directory containing 193 offers in early September. This is an increase on last year.

We are working to use the e+ smartcard with the new parking Pay on Foot machines when they are installed in the town centre multi-storey car parks to give discounts to local residents.

Finance

In addition to the core functions of accounting, budget monitoring, financial advice and debt control the main task in quarter is to provide support and advice in preparing budget options for 2011/12 onwards.

Human Resources

HR will ensure the new CRB form is correctly introduced with minimal disruption.

They will participate in an authority-wide recruitment audit.

The team will continue to monitor the mentoring scheme.

We will hold a network event for first line managers.

We expect to carry out a lot of work on the job evaluation project when the first list of job evaluation scores comes out in July.

We will run safeguarding sessions run for Leisure staff and collate data in preparation for new safeguarding procedures.

There are a few difficult cases which are likely to lead to hearings this quarter.

Contracts

Engineering Consultancy Contracts (Jacobs Babbie Replacement)

We will complete the mini-competition for the Bridges and Structures Management & Maintenance Contract by confirming the award and placing the contract.

Car Park Management Contract

In quarter 2 the new car park equipment will be ordered and delivered, though delivery may be early in quarter 3. Hand over of back office administration will be progressed and near completion. Review of car park pricing options, which is dependent on the functionality provided by the new equipment, will be undertaken.

Mercury Abatement/Replacement Cremators Contract

In quarter 2 we will sign the contract for supply, installation and five years maintenance.

South Hill Park Contract

In quarter 2 we will sign a contract with the preferred bidder and work will start, subject to Thames Water approval for the scheme as tendered.

Refuse Collection Contract

In quarter 2 the tender documents are with the invited bidders. We will respond to questions and clarifications. Tenders are due for return in early September, when we will start the evaluation process, with preferred bidder identified in early November. This timescale supports award of contract in January 2011.

Equalities

Having gained the achieving level of the equality framework on 2nd July we will start focussing on the action plan arising from the inspection to make us better still.

Following a corporate presentation on Islam in June some Muslim employees have approached us to work with us to extend understanding of the needs of the Muslim communities in work and our community. We will use this encouraging approach to improve knowledge throughout the department.

We expect to complete Equalities Impact Assessments in the quarter. One, a policy on the unreasonable treatment of persistent complainants is likely to lead to a full published assessment. The other, on the procurement process for Refuse Collection, is unlikely to progress beyond initial assessment.

Performance Management

We will support the extension of the new performance management system.

Customer Care

We will begin our second mystery shopping exercise in September.

Risk Management

We will roll out the Council's revised risk management system to the department.

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT

Building Control

The Building Control team will be undertaking detailed of time recording to establish the true cost of implementing the Building Regulations. A new time recording system has been developed and this will be used throughout the coming year to establish the true cost of meeting the requirements of the Building Regulations service.

Several Building Regulations are being amended in October, parts F, J and L to improve the air tightness, energy performance and ventilation requirements of buildings and hopefully the team will be attending training courses throughout September to prepare for the changes.

Land Charges

It is hoped that the increase in Official Searches will continue in the coming months following the demise of HIPS.

Development Management

The key focus for the DM Service remains the need to balance the budgetary pressures facing the Council against the expectations of maintaining a high performing service which contributes proactively to delivering the Council's objectives. Related to this the managing excellent planning services (MEPS) review of the Planning Service will be a key activity in the forthcoming quarter, with the end of September being the target date for the completion of the review. In the coming quarter the review will look at the following:

- decision making procedures and arrangements
- public consultation and engagement arrangements
- current arrangements for enforcement and compliance.
- accessibility of the service to users including introduction of a Planning Alert system for the public and overhaul of the planning web pages
- priorities for the service
- opportunities for different methods for delivery

This process will involve examining processes operated in the service and exploring the way in which the service engages with other Council Departments, Partners, Councillors, applicants and the community.

It is anticipated that the enforcement function of the service will remain high profile in the coming months and that application numbers are likely to rise slightly on last years low point. This is indicated by the rise in the numbers of pre-application enquiries in the spring and the anticipated applications for the extension of time for the town centre outline planning permission, Bracknell Headspace, residential development in Cain Road and Bay Drive as well as further phases at Jennetts Park.

Until the details of the precise programme of changes are announced by the Government in the autumn, it is unclear as to the impacts the localism agenda will have. Previous experience is that uncertainty brings with it increased service pressures including more speculative applications and resultant appeals.

Other tasks currently underway include:

- Establishing a service user panel and other initiatives to ensure greater customer focus within the service indexing of the recently completed electronic capture of planning micro-fiches.
- Introducing new arrangements for specialist listed building and conservation advice
- Making available for internal use the planning records back to 1948 which have been captured electronically
- Continued involvement in the POS Development Management Project.
- Work closely with the Planning Policy Section in the formulation of planning policy documents.

Highway Network Management

Co-ordination Headlines

- National Grid Gas continues with their 5-7 year mains replacement program with Bullbrook being the next area to be tackled after completion of the Priestwood schemes. NGG acknowledge their poor performance in Priestwood and plan to complete works in a slower more sequential manner.
- Jennetts Park / A329 roundabout works have commenced offline with the online works due to start 16th August 2010.
- Junction capacity improvements have commenced at the A322 Bagshot Road, Sports Centre roundabout which are due for completion September 2010.
- Thames Valley Police in partnership with BFC placing Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras at numerous locations across the borough for crime prevention purposes. Subject to planning permission where necessary and to be installed by March 2011.
- Trial holes being dug to prove a route for Scottish and Southern Energy between Bracknell and Camberley. Commencement dates are not yet confirmed but are likely to be in 2011.
- Scottish and Southern Energy planned high voltage cable route between Bracknell and Ascot trial holes completed awaiting program of works which are likely to commence January 2011.
- Next generation of broadband is commencing in Crowthorne and Yateley BT exchange areas from April 2010.
- Olympic Route Network 2012 – an alternative route runs through the borough in the form of A322/A332 and A322/A329 to Eton Dorney. It is expected that 30,000 spectators plus the Olympic family will be accessing this venue each day. The number of vehicles taking the alternative routes is currently unknown.

The team will continue to focus on safety inspections and inspections of reinstatements within 6 months of completion in order to tackle defects at the earliest possible stage.

Spatial Policy

Further work will be carried out to analyse the responses to the options consultation on the Site Allocation Development Plan Document. A revised programme will be prepared for taking forward the work of the section in light of uncertainties about national policy and the forthcoming abolition of Regional Strategies. It is hoped that work can continue on the Supplementary Planning Document for the Core Strategy

site at Warfield. Further evidence base material is being secured including consideration of a first draft of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, reports due to be received on ecology for the potential development sites and a final Flood Risk Assessment.

Further work will be carried out to analyse responses following completion of the consultation on the draft Streetscene SPD and to produce a final version for adoption.

Consultation on the Thames Basin Heaths SPD has been completed but further work has been delayed while critical legal issues are resolved relating in particular to the mechanism for securing funding for access management and monitoring within the SPA. This policy area is also likely to be affected by recent national and regional changes as part of the work was being co-ordinated by the Regional Planning Board and the regional housing figures formed the basis for the funding projections.

The section will continue to review the changes being brought to the planning system, including the impacts of the revocation of the South East Plan, and advise members accordingly.

Climate Change and Carbon Management

The revised Climate Change Action Plan (April 2010) is scheduled for the Executive meeting on 13th July 2010.

DECC has postponed the annual reporting deadline for NI185: carbon dioxide emissions from LA operations from 31st July 2010 until further notice. Local authorities will be given sufficient time to complete their returns.

Preparation is underway to submit registration for the mandatory Carbon reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency scheme by 30th September 2010.

Officers are working with Scottish and Southern Energy to prepare a bid to the Low Carbon Network Fund by the end of August 2010. Anticipated start date is End of November 2010.

Transport Management Section

Bracknell Forest Multi-Modal Transport Model (BFMMTM)

This model is now complete and ready for use. The Director has established a charge to allow developers access to the model (at their discretion) for when they submit large planning applications within the borough. The charges set are:-

£15,000 for six months with £3,000 for every additional month.
£30,000 for twelve months

Traffic and Safety Group

Casualty Reduction – Local Safety Schemes:

Design work will be completed and works orders imminent for the following schemes:

- A3095 Foresters Way / Magdelene Road Roundabout
- Running Horse Roundabout

Other Traffic Management Schemes:

Preliminary design work will be underway for the following schemes:

- Winkfield Row Speed Mgt Scheme
- Gateway Signing - Phase 3

Works will be substantially complete for the following:

- Western Road / Downshire Way bus gate (phase 2 – traffic signalisation)
- Pedestrian radar review at signalised crossings (phase 1/2)

Preliminary design work will be complete on the following schemes:

- Doncastle Road / A329 Berkshire Way Roundabout - Capacity Improvement
- Coral Reef Junction - Capacity Improvement
- A329 London Road (Ascot) j/w Priority Road and Fernbank Road - Capacity Improvement

Detailed design work will be nearing completion on the following schemes:

- Horse & Groom Roundabout - Capacity Improvement
- 20 mph speed limits

Assessment work will be complete for the following:

- Speed assessment of Locally Important Roads (phase 1)

Negotiations will be on-going with landowners at Maidens Green Crossroads regarding the future introduction of traffic signals.

Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO):

The next on-street parking restriction TRO will have been implemented, including the associated highway works.

The TRO for revised waiting restrictions in Bull Lane will have been implemented.

Road Safety Education, Training & Publicity:

The following Education, Training and Publicity activities will take place:

- Junior Citizen – multi-agency event
- Road Safety Educational Presentations for key local businesses
- 'StartSafe' Pre-driver education event
- Summer 'Bike-ability' Cycle Training courses

Transport Implementation Group

Transport Model:

- Work continues on two corridor studies, the A322 and the A329, testing possible improvements and providing the basis for engineering solutions to be developed. Once complete, these models will be used to assess the effectiveness of a range of improvement schemes.
- The strategic model will be an essential tool in identifying the transport impact of the Borough's housing allocations, as well as any phased development of the town centre. Changes to these scheme programmes or to the levels of development will all require re-modelling.

- Call-off consultants are to be appointed in July 2010 to undertake any modelling that cannot be accommodated in-house over the next three years.

LTP3

- Officers are now working on strategies to be included within the Plan. These will be developed in the next quarter for consultation on the LTP's dedicated website www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/LTP3.
- Work will continue on the infrastructure requirements to support the core strategy and further modelling work will be carried out to support this work which will then help form the Implementation plan

Passenger Transport

- A range of Strategy Documents are being prepared as part of the LTP Process, including Bus Strategy, Bus Information Strategy, Real Time Passenger Information Strategy, Smart & Integrated Ticketing Strategy.
- An audit of all bus stop infrastructures in the Borough is in hand as part of this exercise.
- Now that service changes have settled, it is hoped to draw up a Quality Bus Partnership with First in respect of service 190 (Bracknell – Reading) either unilaterally or with the involvement of the other two councils on the line of route.

Travel Choice

- Preparations are beginning to review the Council's own Travel Plan
- The annual Car Free Challenge will be competed for on 24 September
- The next edition of the e-Newsletter for businesses will be published

Engineering Projects and Adoptions Group

In the Highway Capacity and Roadspace Allocation Programme:-

- Works are due to be completed on the Sports Centre Roundabout capacity improvement scheme

In the Public Transport Programme:

- Construction is due to start in September on the new bus stop linking footway along Church Road, Winkfield.

In the Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements Programme :

- Design work is due to continue on a number of footway/cycletrack links

In the Parking programme:

- Further Planning applications are to be submitted on the 3rd phase of parking schemes in Halewood, Highfield, Nutley, Pembroke, Deepfield Road, Lily Hill Road and Oakengates.

Section 278 Highway Works:

- Works are due to be completed in Feb 2011 on the new A329 Roundabout and Spur Road as part of the Jennett's Park Development off-site highway improvement works

Annex A: Staffing information

Staffing Levels

	Staff in Post	Staffing Full Time	Staffing Part Time	Total Posts FTE	Vacant Posts	Vacancy Rate
Directorate	11	10	1	10.68	0	0%
Environment & Public Protection	106	88	18	99.41	5	4.50%
Housing	67	55	12	61.27	4	5.63%
Leisure & Culture	371	165	206	257.55	42	10.17%
Performance & Resources	38	29	9	34.49	0	0%
Planning & Transportation	85	65	20	78.65	7	7.61%
Department Totals	678	412	266	542.04	58	7.88%

Overall the vacancies have decreased by 32 this quarter, as many posts were given up as savings made for the 2010/11 budgets, with effect from 01 April 10. Although Leisure & Culture still looks high, they have reduced their vacancies by 25%

There has been little recruitment this quarter, but we have been successful in recruiting a number of Future Jobs Fund employees, and a number of administration and leisure employees.

Staff Turnover

For the quarter ending	30 June 2010	3.55%
For the year ending	30 June 2010	10.84%

Comparator Data

Total turnover for Bracknell Forest Council, 2009/10: 13.31%
 Median turnover all employers 1 January to 31 December 2009: 13.5%
 Median turnover public services 1 January to 31 December 2009: 15.2%
 (Source: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development survey 2009)

There were 24 leavers this quarter, which is an increase of 9 compared to last quarter and an increase of 8 to the same quarter in the previous year. Of those leavers, 7 were made redundant, 2 were transferred to VINCI park under the TUPE regulations, 3 retired, 1 came to the end of a fixed term contract and the remaining 11 resigned.

Turnover this quarter is high as a result of the budgets, which is reflected in the quarterly Staff Turnover increasing to 3.55% this quarter compared to 2.20% last quarter, and compared to 2.36% the same quarter last year. Annual turnover is up to 10.84% this quarter compared to 9.88% last quarter, but is a decrease on the 13.4% in the same quarter last year.

This is attributed to the 7 redundancies and 2 TUPE transfers made in this quarter. Should these figures not have been included, then the quarters turnover rate would have been 2.22% and annual turnover rate would have been 9.54%

Turnover remains low compared to national figures for all employers or all public sector organisations.

Sickness Absence

Staff Sickness (1 April - 30 June 2010)

Figure 1. Total Sickness by People in Post

Section	Total staff In Post	Quarter 1 Number of days sickness	Quarter 1 average per employee (People in post)	2010/11 average per employee (People in Post)
Directorate	11	12 1.09		4.36
Environment & Public Protection	106	59.5	0.56 2.25	
Housing	67	119.5 1.78		7.13
Leisure & Culture	371	369 0.99		3.98
Performance & Resources	38	42 1.11		4.42
Planning & Transportation	85	172.5 2.03		8.12
Department Totals (Q1)	678	774.5 1.14		
Department Totals (10/11)		774.5	4.56	

Comparator data	All employees, average days sickness absence per employee
Environment Culture and Communities 09/10	6.36 days
Bracknell Forest Council 09/10	6.29 days
All local government employers 2009 (Source: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development survey 2009)	10.7 days
All sectors employers in the south east 2009 (Source: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development survey 2009)	6.0 days

Following a dip in our sickness performance last year, caused by a high number of long term sickness cases, this quarter the absence rates in ECC have returned to their usual low level compared to Council as a whole, the average of all employers in the south and the average of local government employers. This is very positive and reflects the continued effort we put into absence management especially a recent decrease in long term sickness cases.

The above figure of 774.5 days includes 7 employees with long term sickness, which totals 259 days for the quarter. These account for 33.4% of all absence which is a decrease on last quarter (35.8%). This included:

4 employees in Leisure and Culture – 131 days

1 employee in Housing – 42 days
2 employees in Planning & Transportation - 86

4 of these are now back to work. The 3 remaining cases are being managed through Occupational Health and performance improvement procedures.
The total number of sickness days this quarter has decreased by 361 days compared to last quarter, and by 498 days to the same quarter last year.

The most notable changes this quarter are Environment & Public Protection which has decreased by 110.5 days (nearly two-thirds), Housing which has decreased by 86 days (just over two-fifths), Leisure & Culture which has decreased by 244 days (just over two-fifths) and in Planning & Transportation which has increased by 88.5 days (just over half).

The decreases are due to a large reduction in short term sick in Environment and Public Protection, 2 employees returning from long term sick in Housing, and a mixture of a reduction of short term sick and the return of 3 employees who were on long-term sick in Libraries. The increase in Planning and Transport is mainly related to 2 individuals who were on long term sick, one of whom has returned this quarter.

Long-term sick tends to be decreasing. One contributing factor is that long-term sickness is being handled more proactively by managers; with more employees being referred to Occupational Health at an early stage, and an increase in dealing with cases through the Capability and Sickness Procedures.

There doesn't seem to be any other specific trends or patterns across the Department in terms of either the amount of long-term and short-term sick, or the quarter in which it occurs.

In general, HR feels managers are being more proactive when dealing with absence and the general feedback is that informal reviews of sickness are taking place more regularly. Managers are now approaching HR with regards to employees they feel have sickness issues, rather than HR raising the issue with the manager.

Annex B: Financial information - Tables

Table 1.

	Net Original Budget	Virements & Budget C/fwds	Current Approved Budget	Departments Projected Outturn	Variance Over/(Under) Spend	Variance This Period
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Director of Environment, Culture & Communities						
Director and Support	276	0	276	276	0	
Training, Marketing, Research & Development	15	0	15	15	0	
	291	0	291	291	0	0
Chief Officer Leisure & Culture						
Archives	126	-2 i	124	124	0	
South Hill Park	523	0	523	523	0	
Community Arts & Cultural Services	78	3 i	81	81	0	
Parks, Open Spaces & Countryside	1,111	34 :	1,145	1,145	0	
Sports Development & Community Recreation	101	-17 i	84	84	0	
The Look Out	173	-3 i	170	170	0	
Edgbarrow / Sandhurst Sports Centres	135	-3 i	132	132	0	
Bracknell Leisure Centre / Coral Reef	847	29 v	876	876	0	
Harmanswater Swimming Pool	13	0	13	13	0	
Easthampstead Park Conference Centre	55	-19 i	36	36	0	
Horseshoelake Water Sports	26	0	26	26	0	
Downshire Golf Complex	-150	0	-150	-150	0	
Libraries	1,862	-6 v	1,856	1,856	0	
	4,900	16	4,916	4,916	0	0
Chief Officer Environment & Public Protection						
Waste Management	7,490	3 i	7,493	7,587	94	94
Street Cleaning	1,217	2 i	1,219	1,219	0	
Closed Circuit Television	48	0	48	48	0	
Highway Maintenance (Including Street Lighting)	4,238	2 i	4,240	4,240	0	
On/Off Street Parking	-673	-3 v	-676	-676	0	
Easthampstead Park Cemetry and Crematorium	-623	-4 i	-627	-627	0	
Environmental Health (Including Pest and Dog Control)	736	-6 v	730	730	0	
Trading Standards (Including Licensing)	310	60 v	370	370	0	
Emergency Planning	100	-2 i	98	98	0	
Landscape Holding Account	-172	67 v	-105	-105	0	
Parks, Open Spaces & Countryside	901	-68 v	833	833	0	
Other	155	0	155	155	0	
	13,727	51	13,778	13,872	94	94
Chief Officer Planning & Transport						
Transport Policy, Planning and Strategy	603	-14 i	589	589	0	
Traffic Management and Road Safety	752	-7 i	745	745	0	
Public Transport Subsidy including Concessionary Fares	1,256	316 :	1,572	1,572	0	
Adult Social Care Grant Funded Services	0	0	0	0	0	
Building Control	-29	-5 i	-34	-34	0	
Development Control	110	9 i	119	119	0	
Planning Policy (Including Local Transport Plan)	1,003	-26 i	977	977	0	
Local Land Charges	-83	0	-83	-83	0	
Environmental Initiatives	165	6 v	171	171	0	
Other	118	-1 i	117	117	0	
	3,895	278	4,173	4,173	0	0
Chief Officer Housing						
Housing Options	172	11 i	183	183	0	
Strategy & Enabling	289	11 :	300	300	0	
Housing Management Services	-60	14 :	-46	-46	0	
Forestcare	50	-1 :	49	49	0	
Supporting People	1,892	8 i	1,900	1,900	0	
Housing Benefits	374	-20 i	354	354	0	
General Grants, Bequests & Donations	7	-5 i	2	2	0	
Other	23	0	23	23	0	
	2,747	18	2,765	2,765	0	0
Chief Officer Performance & Resources						
Departmental Management	557	47 i	604	604	0	
Departmental Support Services	1,036	47 :	1,083	1,083	0	
Departmental Personnel Running Expenses	91	0	91	91	0	
Departmental Office Services Running Expenses	190	0	190	190	0	
Departmental IT Running Expenses	265	0	265	265	0	
Smartcard	167	-2 i	165	165	0	
	2,306	92	2,398	2,398	0	0
In Year Savings		0	0	0	0	
Total Cash Budgets	27,866	455	28,321	28,415	94	94
Non Cash Budgets						
FRS17	148	0	148	148		
Corporate / Departmental Recharges	4,466	0	4,466	4,466		
Capital Charges	3,888	0	3,888	3,888		
	8,502	0	8,502	8,502	0	0
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE SERVICES	36,368	455	36,823	36,917	94	94
Memorandum item :-						
Devolved Staffing Budget			18,915	18,915		

APPENDIX B – Table 2.

	Total Budget 2010/11 £'000s	Cash Budget 2010/11 £'000s	Cash Budget Revised 2010/11 £'000s	Expenditure to date £'000s	Total Commitments For 2010/11 £'000s	Amount left to spend £'000s	Estimated Total Funding Required for the Year £'000s	Cash Budget 2011/12 £'000s	(Under)/Over Spend £'000s	(Under)/Over Spend Section 106 £'000s
ENVIRONMENT & PUBLIC PROTECTION	4,881.1	4,881.1	4,823.2	140.1	98.9	4,584.2	4,823.2	-	-57.9	-
HOUSING	3,880.6	3,880.6	3,880.6	75.2	20.9	3,784.5	3,880.6	-	0.0	-
PLANNING & TRANSPORT	2,267.4	2,267.4	2,267.4	-2.60	410.6	1,859.4	2,267.4	-	-	-
LEISURE & CULTURE	3,079.3	3,079.3	3,079.3	80.8	85.4	2,913.1	3,079.3	-	-	-
SUPPORT SERVICES	252.0	252.0	252.0	28.3	17.0	206.7	252.0	-	-	-
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE CAPITAL PROGRAMME	14,360.4	14,360.4	14,302.5	321.8	632.8	13,347.9	14,302.5	0.0	-57.9	0.0
Percentages										
				2.2%	4.4%	92.9%			0.0%	

Annex C: Performance against Service Plan Actions

Please see next page

MTO1 - To build a vibrant Bracknell town centre that residents are proud of					
Detailed Action	Due Date	Owner	Status	Last Updated	Comments
1.6 improving perceptions and vibrancy of Bracknell town centre in the run-up to the redevelopment					
1.6.12 Develop an improvement plan for the main library building with the Building Surveyors.	31/03/2011	ECC	N/A		Building Surveyors have been briefed to produce costed plans for a new library layout.
MTO2 - To keep our parks, open spaces and leisure facilities accessible and attractive					
Detailed Action	Due Date	Owner	Status	Last Updated	Comments
2.1 Restoring South Hill Park grounds					
2.1.1 Let contract to carry out work on South Hill Park grounds.	30/06/2010	ECC	✓		Lead contractor identified and approved by the Executive. Draft contract has been drawn up. Subject to the contract being complete by early August, set up on site is proposed for September.
2.1.2 Start work on site at South Hill Park	31/10/2010	ECC	✓		Contractor now due on site from September 2010. Works due to be completed by December 2011.
2.5 Increase the amount of countryside and open space available for residents					
2.5.1 Improve the attractiveness of and accessibility to recreational green space	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		Targeted projects underway at key sites managed by Bracknell Forest Council and Parish / Town Councils. Works include play provision, new paths, interpretation and signage, scrub management, and heritage conservation.
2.6 Implement the cultural strategy, to maintain and improve the quality of life in the Borough					
2.6.1 Progress Cultural Strategy Action Plan	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		The action plan runs until 2012 and has over 100 individual actions. Progress is monitored by the Cultural Partnership which meets twice per year. All members of the partnership contribute to the action plan. It is recognised that some of





					the actions will by their nature be classed as "ongoing" and over time some may be removed or amended. Some will be described as complete.
2.7 Review and update the Parks and Open Space Strategy					
2.7.1 Publish the Parks and Open Spaces strategy	31/10/2010	ECC	✓		Initial draft is being updated following consultation with key stakeholders.
MTO3 - To promote sustainable housing and infrastructure development					
Detailed Action	Due Date	Owner	Status	Last Updated	Comments
3.1 Producing a Local Development Framework that protects the character of the borough and balances the demand for new housing with the need to protect the wider environment					
3.1.1 Submit the Site Allocations Development Plan document to the Secretary of State	28/02/2011	ECC	✓		Preferred Option consultation for SADPD scheduled for November 2010. Target for submission could still be met but Members will consider whether further delay may be prudent given changes to national planning system.
3.1.2 Publish the Infrastructure Plan	31/10/2010	ECC	✓		Draft infrastructure plan prepared to accompany Site Allocations DPD Options consultation. Draft being refined on the basis of the sites being progressed to preferred option stage.
3.1.3 Publish the Warfield Supplementary Planning Document	31/01/2011	ECC	✓		Consultation draft SPD to go to November Executive. Resource issues to be resolved following departure of John Waterton.
3.1.4 Publish the Streetscene Supplementary Planning Document	31/12/2010	ECC	✓		Consultation completed on 5th July for draft SPD. Adoption version scheduled for Executive December 2010
3.3 Implementing a strategy to mitigate the impact of development on the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area					
3.3.1 Publish the Thames Basin Heaths Special	30/04/2010	ECC	✓		Consultation draft to go to Executive October 2010 subject to joint progress






Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy					with other affected local authorities on resolution of strategic access management and monitoring arrangements.
3.4 Updating and implementing the Local Transport Plan					
3.4.1 Consult on the draft Local Transport Plan 3	30/11/2010	ECC	✓		consultation arrangements beign made for October/November 2010.
3.4.2 Implement action plan of Local Transport Plan 2.	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		Continue to deliver the strategies and capirtal programme as defined by the LTP.
3.4.3 Produce Transport Asset Management Plan	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		Work continues to capture data to inform the production of the final plan. This work has enabled an initial asset valuation to inform the return to government in respect of council assets. The need is to compillie all of the data and produce a plan. The intention is to look to the Hampshire CC framework agreement for consultancy resource.
3.6 Providing more choice for social housing applicants through the introduction of Choice Based Lettings					
3.6.1 Implement Housing Employment Connection Service as part of Bracknell Forest Council My Choice	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		The BFC job search web portal is scheduled to go live at the end of July
3.8 Implement the Housing Strategy to provide the right homes for the diverse housing needs of the community in Bracknell Forest					
3.8.1 Implement and review the Housing Strategy Action Plan	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		The spending programmes of the Council's housing strategy were reviewed at the Executive meeting on the 13th July and decisions wer taken to set up new schemes and re-allocate funding.
MTO4 - To keep Bracknell Forest clean and green					
Detailed Action	Due Date	Owner	Status	Last Updated	Comments
4.1 Maintaining standards of landscape maintenance					

4.1.1 Use the money in the annual environmental enhancement budget to target landscape maintenance problem areas	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		Linked to 4.3.1 Funding held back to enable the additional cut/works along high speed roads in the spring Funding also used to address a number of landscape areas not subjected to routine maintenance identified as part of the Britain in Bloom work.
4.3 Keeping satisfaction in the streetscene above 75%					
4.3.1 Use the money in the annual environmental enhancement budget to target streetscene problem areas	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		Linked to 4.1.1 Funding held back to enable the additional cut/works along high speed roads in the spring
4.4 Increasing recycling rates to 50% through the RE3 initiative					
4.4.1 Complete the 2010/11 actions from the RE3 strategy and progress the actions for future years	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		Review held in October 2009 and actions have been completed.
4.7 Improving energy management in Council and school facilities and encouraging better energy management throughout the borough					
4.7.1 Improve energy management in Council and school facilities	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) registration completed. Automatic meter readers (AMRs) and Carbon Trust Standard accreditation in progress.
4.7.2 Implement a pilot scheme to switch off selected street lighting at specified times	31/03/2011	ECC	N/A		Feasibility has been assessed. Pilot has been scheduled to commence in the summer 2011.
4.7.3 Test the feasibility of decentralised energy systems including wind farms or energy centre	31/05/2010	ECC	✓		Feasibility Study for distributed energy scheme at Bracknell Leisure Centre completed. Financial modelling under review. Feasibility study for wind turbines on council owned land identified two potential sites. Option to lease one site requested for a wind monitoring mast. Second site held over pending development planning decision.
4.8 Implement the local climate change action plan,					

in line with the Nottingham Declaration					
4.8.1 Implement the local climate change strategy in line with the Nottingham Declaration	31/03/2011	ECC			Progress on Climate Change Action Plan (Oct 2008 - 2009) reported to Council in January 2010. Updated Climate Change Action Plan (April 2010) approved by Council July 2010
4.8.2 Implement the Carbon Reduction Management Plan	31/03/2011	ECC			Climate Change Action Plan being implemented.
4.8.3 Report on the Council's obligations in response to the Pitt review (flood risk, drainage, adaptation)	30/11/2010	ECC	N/A		Awaiting legislative detail in order to be able to confirm the full implications to the Council. In the interim period working with the Environment Agency and capturing all relevant data to assist us in relation to what may become a mandatory obligation.
4.8.4 Improving infrastructure for, and promoting walking and cycling	31/03/2011	ECC			A programme of improvements to the walking and cycling network is being implemented, and a programme of promotions is being carried out
4.8.5 Improving facilities for and promoting use of public buses	31/03/2011	ECC			A programme of infrastructure improvements is being implemented and promotion work carried out within the limited resources available.
4.8.6 Promoting Travel Plans and sustainable travel choice	31/03/2011	ECC			New travel plans are being promoted and existing travel plans developed with the relevant organisations, and a programme of promotion of travel choice is being run
MTO5 - To improve health and wellbeing within the borough					
Detailed Action	Due Date	Owner	Status	Last Updated	Comments
5.3 Focusing on prevention, for example by increasing the number of adults participating in at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise per week					
5.3.1 Maintain and promote services that will contribute to increasing the percentage of adults participating in 30	31/03/2011	ECC			Ongoing as part of Leisure and Culture Division's core business

minutes of moderate intensity sport or physical activity on at least 3 days in any week					
5.3.2 Implement the action plans in relation to food safety and health and safety	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		Food Safety Law Enforcement Plan adopted by Executive Member on the 26 July and goes to Full Council on 22 Sept 2010 Health and Safety Law Enforcement Plan was adopted by the Licencing and Safety Committee on 1 July
5.3.3 Carry out road safety education training and publicity activities of road casualty site improvements	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		Education training programmes are being implemented and road casualty site improvements are being designed for implementation this year.
5.3.4 Promoting and facilitating walking and cycling including that of schools		ECC	✓		A programme of Sustainable Modes of Travel to School schemes are being developed and implemented, and programmes of cycle training and promotion of walking and cycling is carried out in schools
5.7 Enabling more people to remain in their own homes through the use of Telecare					
5.7.2 Implement new lifeline monitoring system and promote to users and partners	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		PNC 6 upgrade completed in May. Work on-going to carry out Disaster Recovery in-house and to ensure we benefit from new functionality by working with partners to deliver new services e.g. telehealth
MTO7 - To seek to ensure that every resident feels included and able to access the services they need					
Detailed Action	Due Date	Owner	Status	Last Updated	Comments
7.10 Implementing the Bracknell Forest Partnership Community Engagement Strategy to engage with residents to shape service provision and develop communities					
7.10.9 Implement the actions in the Bracknell Forest Partnership Community Engagement	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		Choice Based Lettings service allowing customers to access housing through the website completed its first full quarter in quarter 1.

Strategy due for completion in 2010/11 and ensure actions for future years are progressed (Environment, Culture and Communities)					Benefits extended their equalities monitoring.
7.5 Implementing a Disability Equality Scheme, Gender Equality Scheme and Race Equality Scheme					
7.5.5 Implement the Disability, Race and Gender Equality Schemes actions due for completion in 2010/11 and progress those actions due for completion in later years (Environment Culture and Communities)	31/03/2010	ECC			The remaining actions are ongoing tasks. We continue to make progress on improving access to all our services.
7.6 Increasing access to services by electronic means					
7.6.2 Improve public access to planning	31/03/2011	ECC			An updated version of Public Access is planned for launch in Q3 and is currently in test. This enhanced tool will add to the current facility which allows planning applications to be viewed online by providing opportunity for persons to register for automatic notification of planning application by e mail.
7.6.3 Improve public information on highway network management	31/03/2011	ECC			Application forms are being revised in line with the roll out of the Electronic Licence Management System (ELMS). The 'Roadworks Finder' (ELGIN) website is integrated with the BFC public website as well as Boris giving information on street and road works in and around the borough. Regular press releases are being issued in advance of planned and reactive major road and street works.
7.6.4 Introduce benefits on line	31/03/2011	ECC			This will be implemented as phase 2 of the current

claims					system replacement. The current system replacement project is running to plan.
7.6.5 Review and extend Bracknell Forest Council MyChoice services	28/02/2011	ECC			The Home connections and employment service HECS, which will be known as BFC my job search has been developed and will be going live imminently
7.7 Implementing the Community Cohesion Strategy to give people a sense of belonging and identity as members of their community					
7.7.2 Contract socially necessary bus services to support access to essential services	31/03/2011	ECC			A number of contracts are in place
7.7.9 Implement actions in 'All of us' Community cohesion Strategy (Environment Culture and Communities)	31/03/2011	ECC			The remaining actions are ongoing tasks. We continue to make progress on improving access to all our services.
7.8 Working within the Bracknell Forest Partnership to show continuous improvement in equalities and diversity in the Council and its services, and work towards attaining the 'Achieving' level of the Equality Framework					
7.8.10 Conduct Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) for new services, strategies and policies and review existing EIAs as part of a rolling three year programme, ensuring all actions resulting from these are built into team/business workplans (Environment, Culture and Communities)	31/03/2011	ECC			Equalities impact assessment for development management published in the quarter. Work begun on EIAs for the refuse collection procurement process and specification and the policy for the treatment of persistent complainants.
7.8.14 Ensure all EIA actions for 2010/11 are implemented and actions for future years progressed (Environment, Culture and Communities)	31/03/2011	ECC			Employees across the department provided case study material, reviewed early documents and were selected for interviews by the inspectors at the beginning of July.

7.8.18 Improve equality monitoring to provide better information on access to and take up of services by different parts of the community (Environment, Culture and Communities)	31/03/2011	ECC			The benefits section introduced monitoring of sexual orientation in April.
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MTO8 - To reduce crime and increase people's sense of safety in the borough

Detailed Action	Due Date	Owner	Status	Last Updated	Comments
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8.10 Work with and support all partners to resolve the issues of greatest concern to residents, from the 2009 neighbourhood survey

8.10.1 Provide training and education on speed reduction in cooperation with the Police	31/03/2011	ECC			Roadside road safety education provided at joint events with police, and driver education schemes are delivered through our membership of the Thames Valley Road Safety Partnership
8.10.2 Work with the Police to enforce speed limits	31/03/2011	ECC			Delivered mainly through our partnership working with the Thames Valley Safer Roads Partnership
8.10.3 Implement appropriate speed management schemes to reduce accidents and improve safety	31/03/2011	ECC			Speed management schemes are included in this years programme for implementation
8.10.4 Carry out highway improvements that can reduce accidents	31/03/2011	ECC			A programme of casualty reduction schemes are included in this years capital programme

8.2 Reducing the number of people who fear crime by 10% by 2011





8.2.3 Coordinate the Council's and partners' response to managing environmental crime through the Cleaner Borough Group	31/03/2011	ECC			The Group continues to meet to good effect. Of particular note is the impact on the level of fly tipping which has dropped considerably as a result of better coordinated actions
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MTO9 - To promote independence and choice for vulnerable adults and older people

Detailed Action	Due Date	Owner	Status	Last Updated	Comments
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9.6 Reducing fuel poverty by increasing the energy

efficiency of homes					
Detailed Action	Due Date	Owner	Status	Last Updated	Comments
9.6.1 Target household occupiers, particularly those receiving benefits, to increase the uptake of insulation	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		Insulation advice now given by benefit teams
9.6.2 Enable improvements in the energy efficiency of mobile homes in the borough	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		currently undertaking research with new products and piloting new measure.
MTO10 - To be accountable and provide excellent value for money					
10.5 Implementing the priority areas of the Service Efficiency Strategy to deliver savings and improve service operation					
10.5.3 Implement the ForestCare Business Plan actions for 2010/11	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		business plan implemented and on target to achieve
10.5.4 Review the planning service (quality improvement in planning project)	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		MEPS project well underway. Detailed time keeping complete and business process mapping underway to be complete in September. Project on schedule for draft recommendations by November 2010.
10.7 Ensuring all council services provide value for money and make effective use of resources					
10.7.12 Ensure value for money through the re-procurement of goods and services	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		Contracts let for car park management, equipment and maintenance Contracts soon to be completed for the replacement of cremation equipment and the procurement of bridge consultancy advise Invitations to tender refuse collection contracts sent.
10.8 Ensure staff are in place with the right skills and capacity to deliver service outcomes and maximise service efficiency					
10.8.5 Develop replacement strategies where groups of senior employees and managers due to	31/03/2011	ECC	✓		Handover plan developed and put into place for the retirement of one of Team Managers in Spatial Policy in July. Finance section working on a programme

retire in the next few years.					of development activities for the Principal Accountant in preparation for the potential retirement of the Head of Finance and Assistant Head of Finance in a few years' time.
10.8.6 Draw up contingency arrangements where very small discrete teams run our services.	31/03/2011	ECC			Draft contingency arrangements being developed for discussion in autumn with view to draft arrangement to be recommended by December 2010.
10.8.7 Examine ways of developing a skills pipeline in professions where national or regional shortages of suitably qualified and experienced professional staff e.g. building control officers, benefits officers and librarians	31/03/2011	ECC			Need for such a review on hold pending outcome of budget cut announcements. Skill shortages in many of these posts becoming less of an issue as a result in structure reviews nationally.
10.8.8 Review staffing structure and future staffing structures to reflect changing markets and ensure service efficiency	31/03/2011	ECC			In year savings have been implemented in planning related activity with 4.5 FTE vacant posts being deleted.
10.8.9 Register all employees working with vulnerable children as required by the introduction of the Independent Safeguarding Authority and draft plans to maintain levels of knowledge of safeguarding available at end of current training programme	31/03/2011	ECC			As a result of the recent changes in Government, the ISA registration scheme has been put on hold until a more 'common sense' approach has been put forward. However, the ISA is still running, and safeguarding regulations introduced in October 2009 continue to apply. Any work completed with regards to the current regulations has been put on hold, but will commence once the new scheme has been announced. In terms of training, no Introduction to Safeguarding workshops were run this quarter so no-one has had any training, however, any outstanding employees

					will be attending the 10 workshops booked between September and December 2010. The Introduction to Safeguarding Workshops will then be run quarterly for any new staff to attend.
MTO13 - To limit the impact of the recession					
Detailed Action	Due Date	Owner	Status	Last Updated	Comments
13.3 Promote the take-up of benefits, allowances and concessions provided by the Council					
13.3.1 Implement benefit take up strategy	31/03/2011	ECC			In the first quarter of 2010/11 the various actions of the benefit take up strategy have generated an additional £ 17,590 of benefits for claimants in Bracknell Forest.
13.3.2 Promote take up of Leisure Saver Scheme	31/03/2011	ECC			Concessions continue to be promoted at leisure facilities. The Leisure Saver Scheme started in December 2004, it is available for persons in receipt of certain benefits (Housing, Council Tax, Income support and Job seekers allowance. Dependants of the applicants are also eligible for the scheme if they live at the same address. The scheme is promoted through a range of channels, there are currently 500 persons on the scheme. The wellbeing team runs activities for persons with disabilities. The team operates at BLC, Coral Reef and Downshire Golf Complex. Disabled access prices are available at all Leisure sites. The red diamonds disabled activities sessions take place at BLC on Sunday evenings.

Annex D: Performance against National Indicators



Please see next page




Indicator Ref	Measure	Current Actual	Current Target	Previous Actual	Comments & Improvement Action	MTO
NI155	Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) (Quarterly)	5		153	On target	MTO 03 - To promote sustainable housing and infrastructure development
NI047	People killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents (Quarterly)	25		23	NI 47 is an annual indicator, so this figure is the latest report available for 2010. Data for 2010 is only available up to the end of April, so this figure represents the rolling 12 month figure up to this point.	MTO 08 - To reduce crime and increase people's sense of safety in the borough
NI048	Children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents (Quarterly)	3			NI 48 is an annual indicator, so this figure is the latest report available for 2010. Data for 2010 is only available up to the end of April, so this	MTO 08 - To reduce crime and increase people's sense of safety in the borough

							figure represents the rolling 12 month figure up to this point.	
NI141	Percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living (Quarterly)						MTO 09 - To promote independence and choice for vulnerable adults and older people	
NI142	Percentage of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living (Quarterly)						MTO 09 - To promote independence and choice for vulnerable adults and older people	
NI154	Net additional homes provided (Quarterly)	124			322		MTO 03 - To promote sustainable housing and infrastructure development	
NI156	Number of households living in temporary accommodation (Quarterly)	20			20	On target	MTO 03 - To promote sustainable housing and infrastructure development	
NI157.1	Processing of planning				87.50%	0.00%	MTO 10 - To be	

	applications - Major applications (Quarterly)							accountable and provide excellent value for money
NI157.2	Processing of planning applications - Minor applications (Quarterly)		94.44%		85.00%			MTO 10 - To be accountable and provide excellent value for money
NI157.3	Processing of planning applications - Other applications (Quarterly)		91.67%		92.99%			MTO 10 - To be accountable and provide excellent value for money
NI159	Supply of ready to develop housing sites (Quarterly)		70.4%					MTO 03 - To promote sustainable housing and infrastructure development
NI177	Local bus and light rail passenger journeys originating in the authority area (Quarterly)							MTO 03 - To promote sustainable housing and infrastructure development

NI178.1	Bus services running on time - Proportion of non-frequent scheduled services on time (Quarterly)						MTO 03 - To promote sustainable housing and infrastructure development
NI178.2	Bus services running on time - Excess waiting time for frequent services (Quarterly)						MTO 03 - To promote sustainable housing and infrastructure development
NI182 182	Satisfaction of businesses with local authority regulatory services - NI-182 (Basic indicator) (Quarterly)	77.2%			72.1%		MTO 11 - To understand and promote the borough's economic activity and potential
NI184	Food establishments in the area which are broadly compliant with food hygiene law (Quarterly)	94			91		MTO 05 - To improve health and wellbeing within the borough
NI188	Planning to adapt to climate change						MTO 04 - To keep Bracknell Forest clean

	(Quarterly)								and green
NI191	Residual household waste per household (Quarterly)				646				MTO 04 - To keep Bracknell Forest clean and green
NI192	Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting (Quarterly)				37.8%				MTO 04 - To keep Bracknell Forest clean and green
NI193	Percentage of municipal waste land filled (Quarterly)				44.48%				MTO 04 - To keep Bracknell Forest clean and green
NI195.1	Improved street and environment cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting) - Litter (Quarterly)		1%	4%					MTO 04 - To keep Bracknell Forest clean and green
NI195.2	Improved street and environment cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting) - Detritus (Quarterly)		1%	7%					MTO 04 - To keep Bracknell Forest clean and green

NI195.3	Improved street and environment cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting) - Graffiti (Quarterly)	1%	2%				MTO 04 - To keep Bracknell Forest clean and green
NI195.4	Improved street and environment cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly-posting) - Fly-posting (Quarterly)	0%	3%				MTO 04 - To keep Bracknell Forest clean and green
NI196	Improved street and environmental cleanliness -- fly tipping (Quarterly)	2	2	2		May & June substantial reductions in incidents	MTO 04 - To keep Bracknell Forest clean and green

Annex E: Corporate strategic risks owned by Director of Environment, Culture & Communities

RISKS ABOVE TOLERANCE LEVEL									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk Owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
1	B2	B2	Demographic and socio economic changes	Medium Term Objective 6, 7, 9, 11, 12 and 13.	The council plans in advance for possible demographic changes and estimates of this have been built into the budget. A high number of the services provided by the Council are demand-led, however, and it can be difficult to predict this accurately. It is recognised that the profile of elderly and young people, and ethnic diversity is rapidly changing in a number of other areas also, which can be difficult to map, and can have a significant impact.	Unplanned demographic or socio-economic changes and increasing level of inward migration and housing development have significant detrimental impact on the delivery of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community does not receive services they require • Sudden surges in community and police issues • Impact on recruitment • Adverse publicity • Reputation damaged 	Director Adult Social Care and Health/ Director of Children, Young People and Learning / Director of Environment Culture and Communities	No change this quarter.

RISKS ABOVE TOLERANCE LEVEL									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk Owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
2	B2	B2	Demand led services	Medium Term Objective 5, 6, 7 and 9.	There are challenges to the demand-led care services within Bracknell Forest. The population of older people is set to dramatically increase and there are more, younger, people coming into the system with intensive support needs and there is a changing incidence of disability. These services represent major components of the Councils funding provision. Reduction in the current population with input on demand led services.	Finances and/or resources required to support demand are significantly higher than planned. Economic downturn may lead to increased demand for some services e.g. provision of accommodation for homeless. Effect of potential free personal care unknown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More and more resource is needed to run the services • Significant budget overpends • Money drawn from other services • Cost spiral • Reductions in service level the council can offer • Damage to reputation if services reduced • Revenue problems not resolved by capital investments • Adverse effect on staff morale affected • Adverse effect on assessments • Members need to make unpopular decisions. • Councils finances compromised • Cost increases • Timescales change 	Director Adult Social Care and Health/ Director of Children, Young People and Learning / Director of Environment Culture and Communities	No change this quarter.

RISKS ABOVE TOLERANCE LEVEL									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk Owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
3	B2	B2	South East Plan	Medium Term Objective 3.	<p>The South East Plan (SEP) has been published and the increased housing allocation has now been determined as 13000 dwellings to be provided in the Borough during the period 2006 to 2026. The significant level of increased housing in the borough set out in the SEP will require an accompanying level of infrastructure improvements (transport, schools, hospitals).</p> <p>The SEP also includes a "jobs allocation " of 79300 jobs during the period 2006 to 2016 to be disaggregated between the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley Local Authorities. It is</p>	<p>Houses built without accompanying improvements in infrastructure or without minimising environmental impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demands on services increase • Infrastructure is put under pressure • Transport system under pressure • Area becomes less attractive to employers • Risk of unemployment • Area becomes less attractive place to live. • Residents complain • Image of Council damaged • Environmental impact e.g. flooding if housing is built on flood plain 	Director of Environment Culture and Communities	<p>The Government has now revoked the South East Plan. Whilst there is no longer a housing allocation or employment allocation, Government has made it clear that we proceed to implement our adopted Core Strategy. We will in time need to review this and begin to create a new Local Plan – more guidance on this expected later this year. The Council is now planning for 2000 less homes than was indicated in the SEP but is still at risk to unwanted development</p>

RISKS ABOVE TOLERANCE LEVEL									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk Owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
4	B2	B2	Town Centre	Medium Term Objective 1, 11 and 13.	<p>estimated that 2000 of these jobs would be a reasonable allocation for Bracknell Forest based on the 13000 dwelling housing allocation.</p> <p>The Town Centre project is dependent on a number of conditions. Key factors are:</p> <p>1) difficulties in securing funding in the current economic climate; and</p> <p>2) the need to secure the commitment of anchor stores to ensure the centre is attractive to other tenants and can subsequently provide an attractive retail centre that can successfully compete with other local towns.</p>	<p>BRP is unable to secure funding in the current economic climate</p> <p>BRP cannot secure the commitment of the anchor stores</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall Scheme potentially unviable • Delays • Council reputation damaged • Satisfaction with Council and services decline • Delays to the Civic Hub project 	Chief Executive / Director of Environment Culture and Communities	BRP are developing new more flexible approaches to delivering the Town centre. Planning applications to provide the flexibility are expected in the 2 nd and 3 rd quarters of this year.

RISKS ABOVE TOLERANCE LEVEL									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk Owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
5	D2	D2	Income projections	Medium Term Objective 10	The Council has made projections and forecasts around income levels e.g. leisure fees and charges, car parks, commercial property and interest	Significantly lower income than projected or income adversely affected by credit crunch and severe adverse weather.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant amount of money needs to be found • Budgets have to be cut to balance the books • Services have to be prioritised/reduced • Staff workloads increase • Staff feel they are being targeted for cuts • Staff are frustrated at situation • Services suffer from lack of resources • Public dissatisfaction with Council services • Detrimental impact on Council reputation • Council reputation damaged 	Director of Environment Culture and Communities	Risk increased this quarter as services continue to be affected by the recession.

RISKS ABOVE TOLERANCE LEVEL									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk Owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
10	C2	C2	Programme management capacity	Medium Term Objectives 1, 6 and 10	Failure to manage major projects effectively could potentially have severe financial, reputational and service impacts.	Failure to control implementation of a major projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project objectives not achieved Cost overruns Delays Council reputation damaged Satisfaction with Council and services decline 	Assistant Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services/Director of Adult Social Care and Health/Director of Children, Young people and Learning/Director of Environment and Culture and Communities	No change this quarter.
11	B2	B2	Litigation	Medium Term Objective 10	Council may be subject to litigation from staff, residents, contractors or others.	Successful action brought against the Council resulting in financial damages and legal costs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial impact not achieved Need to identify savings to cover unanticipated costs Detrimental impact on Council reputation Censure by audit and inspection Adverse publicity 	Assistant Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services/Director of Adult Social Care and Health/Director of Children, Young people and Learning/Director of Environment and Culture and Communities	No change this quarter.
12	D2	D2	Potential failure of key	Medium Term	A significant number of council services	Failure of key contractor to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service fails / adversely 	Assistant Chief Executive/	No change this quarter.

RISKS ABOVE TOLERANCE LEVEL									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk Owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
			contractor(s)	Objective 10.	are provided through contracts with external providers. Economic downturn increases risk of contractor failure. Poor contract management increases risk that services are not delivered effectively.	deliver.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> affected Public expectations of service need to be met Alternative arrangements need to be made Service brought back in house Increased costs Effect on Council Tax/reserves Contract examined Legal implications Censure by audit/inspection Adverse publicity 	Director of Corporate Services/Director of Adult Social Care/Director of Children, Young People and Learning/Director of Environment Culture and Communities	
14	A3	A3	Inspections	Medium Term Objectives 7 and 10	Timing of the 2010 benefits inspection during the implementation of a new Benefits system.	Project resources diverted to preparing and supporting the inspection process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delayed implementation of software Inspection does not reflect true performance 	Chief Executive/Director of Environment, Culture and Communities	Reduced risk inspection went ahead with no impact on Benefits system information.
16	B2	N/A	Maintenance of assets	Medium Term Objective 10	The Council has a large asset base to maintain. Given funding pressures, there is a backlog in building	Failure to maintain highways/buildings to adequate standard resulting in injury, loss or damage to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory obligations not met Increased insurance claims 	Director of Corporate Services, Director of environment, Culture and	No change this quarter.

RISKS ABOVE TOLERANCE LEVEL									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk Owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
					maintenance and reduced resources for maintaining highways.	individuals or property.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> or litigation Health and safety requirements not met Negative impact on Council reputation 	Communities	

RISKS BELOW TOLERANCE THRESHOLD									
Op No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
A	B3	B3	Limited staffing resources	Medium Term Objective 1,2,3,4,5, 6, and 9.	The council is a lean organisation delivering a wide range of services and improvement programme with little excess capacity or resources. There is a perception of a dependency on key individuals (usual	BFBC does not have enough of the right people in the right job at the right time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge & expertise continue to be held with a few key people Senior management involved in too much day to day operational and tactical management Stretches the capacity of the few key people 	SRMG/ All Service Plans and PMRs	No change this quarter.

RISKS BELOW TOLERANCE THRESHOLD									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
63					<p>suspects) in some positions. Senior managers have to balance their strategic v operational roles.</p> <p>There are some concerns around having sufficient critical skills e.g. project and change management across the organisation.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long hours culture continues • Key staff burn out • Levels of stress and staff absenteeism • The council is not 'growing its own' for the future • Some members of staff skill sets do not match those required for the job they are in • Talented people feel under utilised, or frustrated, in their current role and leave • Inertia and resistance to change 		
B	C3	C3	Realising benefits of the town centre redevelopment	Medium Term Objective 1, 11, 12 and 13.	BRP's plans for the mixed-use regeneration are in accordance with the master plan for the town centre developed by the council after	Maximum benefits or improvements of significant change and investment are not realised or demonstrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes do not have desired impact • Value of changes not seen • Service improvements not delivered • VFM questioned 	SRMG/ACE Service Plans and PMR	BRP are developing new more flexible approaches to delivering the Town centre. Planning applications to provide the

RISKS BELOW TOLERANCE THRESHOLD									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
64	E4	E4	Increasing delivery of services through partnerships arrangements	Medium Term Objective 3,5,6,9,11,12 and 13.	extensive consultation with residents in 2002. During the challenging economic climate BRP is currently re-assessing how it can progress its plans for the regeneration.	A key partnership fails to deliver. Unable to agree priorities with partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promises not met, or not seen to be met Staff frustration Impact on morale Adverse publicity Image of Council suffers 	SRMG/ All Service Plans and PMRs	flexibility are expected in the 2 nd and 3 rd quarters of this year.
	E4				The council is involved in a number of key partnerships to deliver services for local people and going forward this will be an even more important part of how Local Authorities deliver better outcomes for their area.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on service delivery Community outcomes compromised. Tension between partners Relationships with other bodies deteriorate Unforeseen accountabilities and liabilities fall on the council Financial implications if 		No change this quarter.

RISKS BELOW TOLERANCE THRESHOLD									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
E	E2	E2	Performance Management	Medium Term	The Council's priorities, activities	The performance management	<p>funding streams previously managed by the Council are transferred to the partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claw-back of grants Don't get joined up approach to achieving the vision for the borough Impacts the ability to deliver on a long-term vision for the borough Impact on reputation if fail to deliver Joint branding dilutes Council reputation Council priorities compromised when merged with others to create partnership priorities 	SRMG/ All Service Plans	No change this quarter.

RISKS BELOW TOLERANCE THRESHOLD									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
			and Data quality	Objective 10.	and resource allocation are informed by an extensive evidence base drawing on data collected across Council departments and from partners. The robustness of this data is crucial to ensuring good decision-making. There are a number of factors which can jeopardise good-quality data, including the complexity of the processes used to obtain data; the age, stability and general fitness-for-purpose of the systems used to obtain data; the expertise of	information reported internally via PMRs and externally to partners and audit and inspection bodies is based on poor-quality data.	<p>resource allocation, leading to deterioration in services, poor staff morale and wasted resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing numbers of externally reported performance indicator outturns qualified by auditors, leading to censure, damage to the Council's reputation, and adverse publicity Disruption of relationships with partners due to the lack of a single, reliable evidence base on which all are agreed Inability of the Council to take full advantage of emerging 	and PMRs	

RISKS BELOW TOLERANCE THRESHOLD									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
67	E3				relevant staff; and the robustness of third-party data validation processes.		opportunities for benchmarking and peer review, or successfully to meet the challenges and opportunities of partnership working, area-based funding and the increasing emphasis on local innovation		
F	E3	E3	Thames Basin Heath's SPA	Medium Term Objectives 2,3 and 4 .	The Government has designated the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) under the EC Birds Directive. This recognises the international importance of heathland as a habitat for endangered bird species. Natural England has advised that new	New mitigating strategy may not satisfy regional needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to meet the housing needs of the growing regional population Educational and social needs not met Target outcomes not achieved around education and social care National performance targets not achieved Public dissatisfaction with the Council Detrimental impact 	SRMG/ ECC Service Plan and PMR	The revocation of the South East Plan has removed a lot of the policy and guidance which was helping to establish clarity with regards to agreeing development around the TBHSPA. BFC is still implementing its agreed strategy and working with other TBH

RISKS BELOW TOLERANCE THRESHOLD									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
G 08	E2	E2	Major fraud or corruption	Medium Term Objective 10	The Council's Codes of Conduct, Constitution, Fraud and Corruption Policy and Employee Handbook provide guidance to both officers and Members on standards of behaviour. However, a small number of irregularities continue to arise each year.	Major fraud and corruption identified from Whistle blowing, disciplinary or complaints process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost implications if unable to recover financial losses arising from fraud or corruption Staff resources in investigating fraud and corruption cases Risk of challenge if associated with procurement Public dissatisfaction with the Council Detrimental impact on Council reputation Censure by audit 	SRMG/ All Service Plans and PMRs	No change this quarter.
					housing within 5 kilometres of the SPA may harm the rare bird populations. A mitigating strategy is in place but this needs to be modified to meet regional needs.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> on Council reputation Censure by audit and inspection 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> authorities on joint arrangements for access management to minimise risk of any legal action.

RISKS BELOW TOLERANCE THRESHOLD									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
H	E2	E2	Corporate Manslaughter	Medium Term Objective 10	New legislation effective from 1 April 2008 means that the Council may be potential culpable as an organisation for the death of individual(s) arising from failure at senior management level.	Successful prosecution under the Act resulting in a publicity order, unlimited fine and remedial order.	<p>and inspection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial impact targets not achieved Need to identify savings to cover unanticipated costs Detrimental impact on Council reputation Censure by audit and inspection Adverse publicity 	SRMG/ All Service Plans and PMRs	No change this quarter.
K	D3	D3	Tree maintenance/ remedial action	Medium Term Objective 10.	Bracknell has a high population of trees. Soil composition in some areas makes the ground surrounding trees susceptible to subsidence. Climate change may have further impact on subsidence. In	Tree assessments not undertaken and problem trees not identified. Remedial work not undertaken to address trees requiring maintenance/re moval.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget issues where assessments and subsequent remedial action has not been planned for Injury to public or staff from falling trees resulting in insurance claim Damage to property resulting in insurance claim Impact on 	SRMG/ ECC Service Plan and PMR	No change this quarter.

RISKS BELOW TOLERANCE THRESHOLD									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
L	E2	E2	Recruitment	Medium Term Objective 6,7,8 and 9..	<p>In addition, there is significant amount of rhododendrons which spread Sudden Oak Disease.</p> <p>Inconsistent recruitment procedures applied in schools and by contractors.</p>	Pre-employment checks and controls not applied.	<p>reputation die to damage caused by trees to public, staff or property</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff/contractors employed do not have the necessary qualifications or experience to carry out their appointed role Children and vulnerable adults could be put at risk if pre-employment checks do not eliminate individuals of questionable character or behaviour from the recruitment process. Council assets could be put at risk if pre-employment checks 	SRMG/ All Service Plans and PMRs	No change this quarter.

RISKS BELOW TOLERANCE THRESHOLD									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
M 71	D3	D3	Key people leave	Medium Term Objective 1,2,3,4,5, 6, and 9.	<p>The council is a lean organisation delivering a wide range of services and improvement programme with little excess capacity or resources. A large amount of knowledge and expertise in the council rests with a few key people in key positions.</p> <p>The council is in competition for staff with a number of similar</p>	A number of key person(s) leaves or is unavailable for a significant period of time	<p>do not eliminate individuals of questionable character or behaviour from the recruitment process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of skills, knowledge and experience No-one else in council has skills or capacity to cover the post Impact felt across whole council Remaining staff under pressure Adverse impact of staff morale leading to stress, increased absenteeism or high turnover Service delivery or improvement programme affected Loss of grant 	SRMG/Corporate Services Service Plan	Retirement of Team Manager in Planning Policy led to increased risk mitigated by a carefully managed handover period.

RISKS BELOW TOLERANCE THRESHOLD									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
O	E3	E3	FOI requests	Medium Term Objective 10.	authorities in the area and London. The number of Freedom of Information requests is rising and the complexity of requests is increasing putting pressure on staff resources and financial budgets.	The Council is unable to respond to all FOI requests or responses are not within the legal time frame.	funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff workloads increase Staff feel they are being targeted Staff are frustrated at situation Services suffer as resources are diverted to respond to FOI requests Detrimental impact on Council reputation if responses are not provided or are inadequate or late Censure by audit and inspection Censure by Information Commissioner 	SRMG/ All Services Plans and PMRs	No change this quarter.
Q	E2	E2	Decision making	Medium Term Objective 10	Current financial circumstances mean that the	The Council is unwilling / unable to take difficult decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to make key decision Savings cannot be made 	SRMG/ Chief Executive	No change this quarter – cuts in PDG and Supporting

RISKS BELOW TOLERANCE THRESHOLD									
No	Score	Score Last Qtr	Short name	Link to MTO	Potential Vulnerability	Potential Trigger	Potential Consequence	Risk owner	Q1 2010/11 Commentary
73					<p>Council must take and maintain some potentially difficult decisions, as outlined previously to inspectors, and maintain a tight financial regime.</p> <p>Some of these decisions will have an impact on frontline services, and there may be a reluctance to do this.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savings made from other areas or across the board • Salami slicing of a number of service areas • Impact on frontline services • Further impact on support services • Service delivery affected • Adverse effect on performance • Complaints from stakeholders • Adverse publicity • Image of Council damaged 		<p>People admin and road safety grants were handled swiftly and decisively.</p>

A						
B						
C						
D						
E						
F						
	4	3	2	1		

Likelihood:
A Very High
B High
C Significant
D Low
E Very Low

Impact:
1 Catastrophic
2 Critical
3 Marginal

LIKELIHOOD

IMPACT

Annex F: Operational Risk Factors

The following table shows all the operational risk factors listed on the 2009/10 Service Plan for Environment, Culture & Communities. Progress on mitigation of these factors has previously been reported with Service Plan actions and indicators as part of the quarterly data set which is attached to PMRs. Paris, the Council's new performance management software, is not yet configured to work with risks, so as an interim measure operational risk factors are reported here, in a separate annex, in Quarter 4.

Ref	Risk	Mitigation	Q1 update on progress	Q1 revised risk
PRIORITY ONE: A TOWN CENTRE FIT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY				
MTO 1: Build a vibrant Bracknell town centre that residents are proud of.				
1.8	Commercial/ financial market deteriorates.	Financial monitoring with BRP at monthly steering group.	BRP and BFC working on a joint framework for delivering Town Centre which reflects current market demand – developing TC risk register to identify threats to strategy as we proceed to implementation.	None.
1.9	Loss or absence of key staff needed to deliver the outcomes.	Workforce Plan in place which prepares for known losses. Monthly monitoring of vacancies at DMT. Quarterly review of sickness at DMT.	No key staff lost in the quarter.	None.
1.10	Political will or commitment.	Good preparation, Member briefings and appropriate lobbying. Good consultation and forward planning.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.
1.11	Lack of available funding from the Homes and Communities Agency.	Meeting with investment director of HCA with a view to agreeing an investment protocol in the Borough.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.
1.12	Construction costs higher than budget.	Accurate specification, partnership work.	No additional risk this quarter.	None.
PRIORITY TWO: PROTECTING AND ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT				
MTO 2: Keep our parks, open spaces and leisure facilities accessible and attractive.				
2.1	Loss or absence of key staff needed to deliver the outcomes.	Workforce Plan in place which prepares for known losses. Monthly monitoring of vacancies at DMT. Quarterly review of sickness at DMT.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.
2.2	Political will	Good preparation, Member	No change to risk in	None.

	or commitment.	briefings and appropriate lobbying. Good consultation and forward planning.	the quarter.	
MTO 3: Promote sustainable housing and infrastructure development.				
3.1	Commercial/ financial market deteriorates.	Financial monitoring with BRP at monthly steering group.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.
3.2	Loss or absence of key staff needed to deliver the outcomes.	Workforce Plan in place which prepares for known losses. Monthly monitoring of vacancies at DMT. Quarterly review of sickness at DMT.	No vacancies in the quarter.	None.
3.3	Lack of officer resource to undertake the volume of large housing projects in the year.	New enabling officer recruited. Resourcing of improvement plan reviewed against existing vacant posts.	No current vacancies.	None.
3.4	Political will or commitment.	Good preparation, Member briefings and appropriate lobbying. Good consultation and forward planning.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.
3.5	Lack of available funding for the affordable housing development.	Meeting with investment director of HCA with a view to agreeing an investment protocol in the Borough.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.
3.6	Inability of ICT suppliers to meet Council timescale for system replacements.	Using framework contract.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.
3.7	RSL and development industry not able to respond to availability of transfer receipt.	Consultation with partners via the Housing Strategy.	Two potential opportunities identified.	None.
3.8	Lack of private rented sector property or interest in renting.	Establish good links with letting agents and developers. Maintain good relations with developers.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.

MTO 4: Keep Bracknell Forest clean and green.				
4.5	Loss or absence of key staff needed to deliver the outcomes.	Workforce Plan in place which prepares for known losses. Monthly monitoring of vacancies at DMT. Quarterly review of sickness at DMT.	No key staff lost in the quarter.	None.
4.6	Political will or commitment.	Good preparation, Member briefings and appropriate lobbying. Good consultation and forward planning.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.
PRIORITY THREE: PROMOTING HEALTH AND ACHIEVEMENT				
MTO 5: Improve health and well being within the Borough.				
5.2	Loss or absence of key staff needed to deliver the outcomes.	Workforce Plan in place which prepares for known losses. Monthly monitoring of vacancies at DMT. Quarterly review of sickness at DMT.	No loss of key staff in the quarter.	None.
5.3	Political will or commitment.	Good preparation, Member briefings and appropriate lobbying. Good consultation and forward planning.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.
MTO 7: Seek to ensure that every residents feels included and able to access the services they need.				
7.11	Political will or commitment.	Good preparation, Member briefings and appropriate lobbying. Good consultation and forward planning.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.
PRIORITY FOUR: CREATE A BOROUGH WHERE PEOPLE ARE, AND FEEL, SAFE				
MTO 8: Reduce crime and increase people's sense of safety in the Borough.				
8.11	Political will or commitment.	Good preparation, Member briefings and appropriate lobbying. Good consultation and forward planning.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.
PRIORITY FIVE: VALUE FOR MONEY				
MTO 10: Be accountable and provide excellent value for money.				
10.18	Lack of adequate benchmark data for housing benefits.	Joined CIPFA benchmark club.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.
10.19	Loss or absence of key staff needed to deliver the outcomes.	Workforce Plan in place which prepares for known losses. Monthly monitoring of vacancies at DMT. Quarterly review of sickness at DMT.	No key staff lost in the quarter.	None.
10.20	Political will or commitment.	Good preparation, Member briefings and appropriate lobbying. Good consultation and forward planning.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.
PRIORITY SIX: SUSTAIN ECONOMIC PROSPERITY				

MTO 11: Promote the Borough's economic activity and potential				
11.6	Lack of suitable locations.	Locations agreed with town centre management.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.
11.7	Loss or absence of key staff needed to deliver the outcomes.	Workforce Plan in place which prepares for known losses. Monthly monitoring of vacancies at DMT. Quarterly review of sickness at DMT.	No key staff lost in the quarter.	None.
11.8	Political will or commitment.	Good preparation, Member briefings and appropriate lobbying. Good consultation and forward planning.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.
MTO 13: Limit the impact of the recession				
13.4	Loss or absence of key staff needed to deliver the outcomes.	Workforce Plan in place which prepares for known losses. Monthly monitoring of vacancies at DMT. Quarterly review of sickness at DMT.	No key staff lost in the quarter.	None.
13.5	Political will or commitment.	Good preparation, Member briefings and appropriate lobbying. Good consultation and forward planning.	No change to risk in the quarter.	None.

Annex G: Additional Departmental Progress Information

ENVIRONMENT & PUBLIC PROTECTION

Emergency Planning & Business Continuity

The Emergency Planning Framework was updated and reissued in June. Work continues on a new Corporate Severe Weather Plan.

The Flood and Water Management Act received Royal Assent during April 2010 and officers have been monitoring the potential implications. Meanwhile working with the Environment Agency data is being mapped against low lying areas of the borough.

Environmental Health

The focus of this year's food safety week in June was to raise awareness about bacteria called campylobacter which causes food borne illness. There are circa 55,000 reported cases of campylobacter in the UK in 2008 but many more go unreported. The realistic number is closer to 300,000. To put the issue into local context 208 cases of food poisoning were investigated last year of which 60 were caused by campylobacter. This bacteria is found in raw poultry and raw meat and can also be passed on by infected pets and other animals. By storing, handling and preparing food correctly and following good personal hygiene rules such risks can be minimised.

The Mayor praised children from across the Borough for their input during Noise Action week when he presented the prizes for competition entries on 30 April. The theme of the week was about keeping dogs quiet. A number of schools got involved in a range of activities. The Council investigated 82 noise complaints in 2009-10 of which 20% were about barking dogs.

A businessman who dumped rubbish behind a hair salon in the Crossway, Bracknell in November 2009 was fined £75 and ordered to pay the Council's costs of £150 and a victim surcharge of £15 after pleading guilty to the offence. 215 reports were investigated in 2009-10 and this resulted in the issuing of 20 fixed penalty notices, 5 simple cautions for flytipping and 2 prosecutions. Flytipping and dumped rubbish incidents have declined by 30% since April 2009.

In the last week of June officers worked with the Police and checked a number of trade vehicles passing through the Borough to ensure that they had a Waste Carriers Licence when required. The results were very encouraging, all those who need such a licence had them. The initiative was part of the work to clamp down on fly tippers. They also attended the "Have your say at home evenings" in areas which recorded the highest number of reports of antisocial behaviour. The idea is for staff to be available to help with problems and give out information to the public. Staff reported receiving a low level of relevance to the environmental health function.

Progress has regularly been reported via the PMR on the air quality work being done. The local air quality management process is multi-staged and since 2003 BFC has concluded at each stage that air quality objectives would be met for carbon monoxide, benzene, butadiene, lead, sulphur dioxide and particulate matter. The Council's screening assessment of 2009 reported exceedences of the standards for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and the Council was required by Defra to undertake a

detailed assessment of Bagshot Road/Downshire Way and Bracknell Road, Crowthorne. The review has concluded that air quality standards are falling along parts of the Bagshot Road/Downshire Way and further monitoring should be undertaken at Bracknell Road, Crowthorne. The implications of this are still being considered and it is possible that there will be a requirement to declare an Air Quality Management Area at some time in the future. We are awaiting further direction from Defra. During this same period and following a tendering process a 3 year contract ending in April 2013 was awarded to the Transport Research Laboratory for the maintenance and ratification of data from the Council's two continuous air quality stations.

Also part of the regular update through the PMR work continues in respect of contaminated land. Three former landfill sites in Warfield were identified as high priority because of past use, high density residential properties and a nearby nursery. Research has since confirmed that sufficient gas protection measures were put in place as part of a Section 106 agreement when the site was filled. In addition, with the passage of time the risk of any significant level of emissions have fallen to a level where there is no cause for concern. The sites have therefore been deemed as not presenting any further risk likely to give rise to an adverse impact to any local resident.

Environmental Services

Enhancements to recycling sites have been continuing with resurfacing at Quelm Park (Larks Hill) site and Oakmede Place, Binfield. A planter has been installed at Birch Hill recycling site to reduce space where fly tipping has been occurring and this has been planted up and will be maintained by the "Beavers" who have their meeting place behind the site.

A number of promotional events have been held in the quarter which includes a Real Nappy Campaign road show and a weekend "Be Green" event at the Look Out. A small amount of the waste performance efficiency grant has been allocated for equipment for the recycling aspect of the "Look Out on the Road" project which goes out to schools to teach waste minimisation for key stage 1 pupils. The recycling team attended two other events in the Town Centre in June with re³ to promote home composting, garden waste collection and the re³ "Are you doing it right" awareness campaign to ensure residents know exactly what they can recycle.

A great deal of work has been going on to prepare the contract specification for the waste collection re-tendering and 5 companies have been advised that they will be invited to tender following the pre qualification questionnaire assessment.

There was an issue with the printing of the recycling calendars for Easter and summer bank holidays with a slow turn-around from the printers which meant some calendars were delivered late and some residents failed to present their bins on the correct day. SITA were very helpful and returned to empty any reported missed bins. Although this was the first time there had been a problem and plenty of notice is always given to the Print Room, it has been decided that the draft of the calendar will be passed to them even earlier in future to ensure there is no risk of delays and residents are fully aware of any changes due to bank holidays.

Another waste analysis undertaken in May has indicated that food waste makes up 35% of the weight of residual waste in the green landfill bins. However, 45% of that waste could be composted using a home composter. This analysis also confirmed that 34% of households are participating in garden waste collections - an increase of

19% from the previous analysis which was in November 09. This analysis confirmed that one category of household classified as Acorn Group 3 and described as 'comfortably off' may require help to understand what can and cannot be recycled. They appear to be the poorest performers when it comes to management of their waste to maximise recycling and minimise landfill. The survey information will help the recycling team to target areas for improvement and promote home composting.

Year end results for waste and recycling are still to be verified by DEFRA. Overall waste has reduced but with it the amount recycled has also reduced to 37% - these reductions follow a national trend. Due to delay with the full opening of the Energy from Waste Plant the percentage landfilled was not on target but an excellent result was achieved with just over 45% of waste now being landfilled having reduced from 60% two years ago.

Both Napier Road and Birch Hill Public Conveniences have had internal refurbishment including new nappy changing units with some cartoon wall tiles. New external doors are shortly to be installed to finish off the refurbishment at these two sites.

Street Cleansing staff and management from Ringway have been undertaking work in their own time to provide a complete "makeover" of the gardens at Waymead Day Centre and have sponsored the provision of raised beds and new paths to allow wheelchair access to them. Homebase have provided plants and the project is a feature in the Bracknell in Bloom entry and judges tour this year.

Preparations for Bracknell in Bloom diverted staff from other scheduled work but they coped generally well overall particularly with the dry spell of weather. Three "Future Jobs" scheme employees have also been taken on as landscape gardeners for six months to help them to gain work experience and training and they in turn are helping to assist with the increased seasonal workload.

Highways Asset Management

The proposed highway maintenance capital works programme was completely revised to take account of the damage caused to the network during the last winter season. Site works programming has proved particularly complex this year ensuring our works do not conflict with or contribute to delays caused by other activities on the network. Progress to date has been promising and several streets have been re-surfaced already, including two strategically important sites on the A329 (Twin Bridges roundabout and Doncastle Road roundabout, both re-surfaced at night to reduce traffic delays).

The recent retirement of the group's Senior Highway Inspector has necessitated secondment of an Assistant Engineer from within the group to fill the gap for the time being. This ensures the continuing fulfilment of the routine highway safety inspections essential to protect the Council's public liability and meet our statutory obligations to maintain the network in a safe condition.

Tenders have been received for the new highway bridges and structures consultancy. These have been analysed and a recommendation made to the Executive Member regarding appointment of the new company. All highway consultancy work has now been subjected to a full EU procurement process and as a result we now have 5 new contracts.

Previous projects to improve our highways asset inventory are proving extremely beneficial in our calculations of the highway network asset valuation to contribute to the Whole of Government Accounts now required by HM Treasury. Initial work puts the value of the highway network at circa £615m.

Operational Support

The new contract arrangement for stray dogs is working well although the number of dogs lost and found has increased significantly over the same period last year. This has created a pressure on staff and budgets. We are looking to review the contract with a view to making savings if we can. During the first quarter much work has been done to prepare for the handover of the administrative arrangements with regard to the new contract in respect of car park management. With the impending removal of one Lektriever much achieving and culling of paper files has also been undertaken. This will become a continuing process to ensure optimum use of available space as well as helping further reduce running costs.

Trading Standards

The Trading Standards team has been busy over the last 3 months. The more significant matters to mention include:

Joint work with Thames Valley Policy to target rogue traders who call at the doorstep and target the elderly and vulnerable in our community. Officers accompanied Thames Valley Police officers in a day of action looking at traders working at homes. The opportunity was taken to update small businesses on recent changes to consumer and waste disposal legislation and reassure residents on the quality of the work they were having undertaken. Both residents and local businesses were advised on the merits of the Council trader approval scheme 'Buy with Confidence' and we have seen an upturn in applications for registration. No significant breaches of the law were uncovered.

It was disappointing to find a retailer with in excess of 100 food items on sale which were outside their "use by" date by over 2 weeks. The sale of food beyond Use By dates is a serious matter because of the potential link to food poisoning. Use by dates are put on high risk foods. The matter is presently being investigated.

Following an investigation a local company was found to be offering credit loans the terms of which were in contravention of the Consumer Credit Act and the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations. It was agreed by the company that they would change their trading methods and they have signed an undertaking to that effect under the Enterprise Act 2002. Any breach of that undertaking will result in legal proceedings.

A scam was exposed involving local residents where a local paper advert invited people to apply to do mystery shopping and receive payment. In fact the residents were being conned into parting with large sums of their own money to a fraudster outside of the UK. Officers are continuing to investigate the matter and appeared in a TV filming for BBC's "The One Show" to publicise the fraud. The show is due to be released on 22nd July.

Complaints from residents which have shown a 30% increase over the same period last year. Additionally officers have intervened to assist residents in resolving their complaints and have also helped them to recover over £9,000 so far. This includes

matters such as a debt for £4,000 written off, compensation for damage to property and replacement or refunds on various goods and services.

Officers have also worked with Thames Valley Police looking at the safety and weight of goods vehicles using roads in Bracknell Forest. Two operations were carried out and 15 vehicles stopped. Of these, 8 were issued with fixed penalty tickets and 2 were prohibited for exceeding the maximum weight limit for the vehicle. The weight limits were exceeded by between 6% and 15%. Weight limits are applied to vehicles and relate to the specification of the braking, suspension and steering of the vehicle. If a vehicle exceeds those limits then the steering, braking and suspension will be adversely affected and this can result in loss of control of the vehicle and threaten the lives of other road users and pedestrians.

Licensing

The first quarter of the year includes Royal Ascot which is always a busy time for officers as they assist colleagues in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to monitor and control the huge numbers of visits to and from the venue, by vehicles used for hire and reward purposes. It is pleasing to report that due to the efforts of licensing officers across Berkshire and the Thames Valley Police, the movement of people and vehicles into and out of the event was much improved over previous years. One unlicensed vehicle and driver from Bracknell was found and the matter is being investigated.

The Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003 needs to be reviewed and republished by January 2011. The process of consultation has started and will continue into the next quarter.

The summer period saw increased numbers of complaints in relation to the noise of the chimes on ice-cream vehicles. Officers have reminded our licensed ice-cream vendors of their obligations and that should further justified complaints be received, action may be taken to review the street trading consents.

The licensing team also carried out joint work with the Police and other local Authorities at Heathrow Airport. The airport is a busy collection and drop point for private hire vehicles and taxis and vehicles from Bracknell Forest frequently visit the site. Officers inspected a number of vehicles originating from the Bracknell area and it is pleasing to report that no major contraventions were found. However a number of unlicensed drivers, vehicles and operators from other areas were found and they will be reported by the Metropolitan Police for possible prosecution.

Taxis have also been pulled in by licensing officers working with Thames Valley Roads Policing locally. The objective was to look at compliance with licence conditions and the roadworthiness of the vehicles. During the period 27 vehicles were inspected over two days. Of these 3 vehicles were found to have defective tyres and 1 vehicle defective lights. Fixed Penalty notices and prohibitions were issued by Thames Valley Police. Points were also awarded to the driver under the Council's enforcement penalty points scheme.

A review of the licence held by Dezires Nightclub was brought to the Licensing Panel by Thames Valley Police due to concerns about crime and disorder. The Panel agreed a 21 day closure of the premises and required additional conditions to be applied to the licence to improve the management control at the premises.

Car Parks

The first quarter is traditionally the quarter when annual season tickets for the High Street car park are issued. The number issued showed a further decline from last year and probably reflects the economic reality during the recession. A drop in income from the car parks is already predicted to be significant. A new Car park management contract came into force as of the end of the quarter. More details will be reported in the next quarter. The new contract will result in substantial savings and improved levels of service.

Cemetery & Crematorium

During the quarter, staff introduced a new plaque system for the memorial roses. The new plaque engraver machine will allow customers to select their own style of plaque, giving them not only more choice but over time will represent a saving to the service.

Work commenced on the development of the cemetery extension. This includes the development of a new dedicated children's burial area which Easthampstead Park Cemetery did not previously have and the provision for further adult burial as the existing area will run out within 12-18 months. Preliminary planning has begun to turn the existing second chapel (which has never been used due to design problems) into a cool room as part of the scheme to replace the cremators and introduce new mercury abatement equipment.

The new pathway from the chapel to the burial area has been completed and will be much safer for those carrying coffins. The previous pathway was made from fascia brick and was slippery during inclement weather offering a risk of trips, slips or falls when carrying a coffin. The new pathway reduces these risks considerably.

re³ Partnership

Work to improve the fire precautions at Smallmead continues and it will not be concluded until the autumn along with other snagging works and modifications to the plant to make it operationally more efficient. Post completion it has been evident that some changes can be made to the structure and management of the site in order to manage fire safety risk even better than was planned. The re³ team have continued with their promotional work and have worked with officers in and around the Borough. The priority is now around waste minimisation and the need for better quality recycling as we all have to improve. The Contamination rate at the sorting plant is currently 17%. If residents stopped using plastic bags for their materials this would fall to 12%. All of this is of course avoidable if residents only follow the advice given as to what can be collected. Looking back at the figures for last year it is pleasing to note that the volume of waste now going to landfill has fallen from 57.73% to 33.21% in just a year. This is due to the commissioning of Lakeside. We will not see such a marked improvement next year. To meet targets and minimise costs we all have to improve our recycling rates.

A trial has been undertaken at Longshot Lane to see how much recycling material can be extracted from the waste stream. A machine was used to pick out cardboard, metal, wood and some 40 tonnes were extracted in just one month that would otherwise have gone to landfill. Attempts are being made to find sustainable outlets for carpets which would result in further significant savings. The success seen at Longshot in the removal of items for reuse has also been trialled at Smallmead. A

total of 30 tonnes were removed in May. In comparison with Longshot, this is a low figure but the nature of the sites is very different.

HOUSING

Housing Register / allocations

As of the end of June there were 2874 active housing applications on BFC My choice, 122 where enquiries are complete and the application was ready to be made live and an additional 1,323 in various stages pending being made live. Of the live applicants 74% were first time applicants, 1% were homeless and 24% were transfer applicants.

Since BFC My choice went live 42% of all applicants have made a bid for a property. We will be working with applicants who have not bid especially those in the higher bands or homelessness to discover why they are yet to bid.

There were 28 properties let in June. The bands of applicants who were housed is as follows,

Lets by band	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	studio	All
Band A	0	0 0 1			1
Band B	2	3 4 1			10
Band C	7	4 0 3			14
Band D	1	0 0 0			1
Band E	0	0 0 2			2
All	10	7 4 7			28

Supporting people

Negotiations with providers were concluded over the quarter. Substantial efficiencies have been achieved against the original contract sums. Contracts will be entered into for the next three years.

Homelessness

There were 12 homeless applications which was a 71% increase on the previous quarter. There were 7 homeless acceptances which was a 40% increase on the previous quarter.

In terms of homeless prevention there were 33 households threatened with homelessness who were prevented from becoming homeless due to the action of the Council. There were 22 loans from the Council to pay for rent in advance with a deposit so households could secure a home in the private rented sector.

Forestcare

Forest care has set up a disaster recovery centre at Easthampstead Park in advance of entering into the buddying arrangements with another local authority.

A Future Job Fund trainee has joined the service for 6 months and is proving very helpful, tidying up the database, assisting with Lone Worker training, and sending out marketing information.

Additional staff resource has been secured for Friday evenings and Saturdays mornings which are the busy time for calls handling.

We have started asking 10% of our new Lifeline customers each month how they found the installation process and so far have had 100% positive feedback.

Upgrade of our Alarm Calls Handling System from PNC4 to PNC6 successfully completed in May – all the team are now trained and familiar with the new system – it has thrown up considerable amounts of work to ensure that we can use it effectively.

To save money we have stopped the maintenance contract with Tunstall to maintain faulty equipment. Instead we will be replacing faulty Lifelines with new equipment as this is cheaper (when purchased through Northern Housing Consortium) than getting old units repaired.

We now monitor 6390 connections and this quarter we took 107,834 alarm calls (this is without including out of hours calls):

Carried out 171 Demonstration/Installs, plus fitted 12 keysafes and 1 health-hub

We made 55 visits to respond to faulty Lifelines

Carried out 544 Data checks

Responding to sheltered housing 387 times

Benefits

At the end of June 2010, there was a benefit caseload of 6811, which was a 2% increase from the caseload at the end of March 2010. Overall, this is a 9% increase in the caseload compared to the position at June 2009.

The following table provides workload figures for the last quarter.

Area of activity	Previous quarter	April/June	Percentage change
Telephone calls	7313	6235	-14%
Visitors to the office	4161 2248		Customer Service stats not available for 1 st June 2010 to 27 th June due to refurbishment.
Scanned items of post	18956 16898		-10%
New claims received	852 755		-11%
Total change events and new claims assessed	3794 5394		42%

There was a benefit user focus group in May just before the Audit Commission inspection.

The Audit Commission inspection took place during the week of 24th May. All benefit staff were involved in the inspection through interviews and focus groups as were customer services staff. Councillor Birch as Executive member, Cllr Ward as Executive member for use of resources and Cllr Finnie and Finch as overview and scrutiny members were interviewed by the Audit Commission during the week.

LEISURE AND CULTURE

Parks and Countryside

Tree services

The structural landscaping of Bracknell Railway Station included four Dawn Redwoods in front of the station, four silver birch in the car-park and a feature Wellingtonia (contractor will replace failed specimen in the autumn).

Feature tree planting (two Silver Birch) in the Broadway House car-park in Sandhurst has been completed.

Over 1,000 saplings of native species have been planted along the entire Highway verge along Bull Lane.

A detailed inspection and maintenance of 69 trees along road routes that were specifically identified for long-term monitoring have been carried out to ensure the safety of the Highway.

450 tree enquiries have been dealt with and some 135 consultation requests from Development Management in respect of planning applications have been processed and corresponded to.

Biodiversity

Working in partnership with Waitrose in April to support the positive management of Wildridings Copse Local Wildlife Site, a presentation was given to their staff on the wildlife in Bracknell Forest and the steps that can be taken to protect and enhance this resource.

Two pond surveys were undertaken as public events in April, first at South Hill Park southern lake where sticklebacks, smooth newts and other species indicate a healthy wetland habitat. The second was the annual survey of great crested newts at "The Newt Reserve" in Warfield where long term trends indicate these rare amphibians are doing well.

Five swift boxes were installed on Bracknell and Wokingham College with the help of their facilities manager.

NI197 - reporting on the performance indicator in June shows that Bracknell Forest Council is exceeding the target for gaining positive management of Local Wildlife Sites in the borough.

During Walk to Work week in April, a lunchtime walk covering the roadside nature reserves was attended by staff and highlighted the value of wild areas in the town.

In May a lunchtime seminar was held with the Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum to discuss the impact of climate change on biodiversity in planning. This extended awareness of planners to green infrastructure and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.

Ongoing ecological advice has been given to major development sites to be included in the Site Allocations DPD including survey work at Amen Corner and Broadmoor Hospital.

'Biodiversity in Bracknell' is the theme for this year's annual parks photo competition to celebrate 2010 being international year of Biodiversity. The competition was launched on 1st June and will close on 1st October. Winning photographs and runners-up will be exhibited in the Community Gallery at South Hill Park in February next year.

Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS)

Work continues to improve recreation opportunities across the borough to reduce pressure on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. Recent improvement works include new paths at Longhill Park, improving connection through to Lily Hill Park

Lily Hill Park

A new picnic table has been installed in Lily Hill Park. The table and seating was all created on site using a Low's fir tree which came down in the park during high winds a few years ago. The picnic table measures 18.4 metres or 60ft long; more than 80 people will now be able to sit at the new table, to be used as a gathering spot for families, community groups, conservation volunteers and schoolchildren.

South Hill Park

Big Day Out

The Friends of SHP worked hard in gathering survey information from visitors during the 'Big Day Out' event held on Saturday 10th July, as part of the self assessment process required by the HLF.

More members joined the group, further extending local resident's input to the restoration work.

Site development

Having successfully secured planning and listed building consent and identified a preferred contractor, restoration proposals can now be progressed.

Arts

The audience development plan for the site is being delivered in tandem with the arts centre and activities such as outdoor performances. Volunteers from the local community have been hard at work on site in support of the wider project.

Marketing and interpretation

New interpretation and information boards have been installed on site at Caesars Camp. The boards provide key information on the layout of the fort, history and wildlife adding to visitor understanding and enjoyment.

Play areas

Playbuilder funding has provided new furniture at Westmorland Park, Farley Wood Community Centre and Evenload Way for 8-13 year-olds.

Design proposals have been drawn up for Chaucer Woods (targeting children up to 8-years old), and a preferred contractor identified.

Of the parish and town council sites, the most recently officially opened site was Ascot Jubilee Recreation Ground, which adjoins Wentworth Way Woodland recently improved as part of the urban woodlands project.

Hoggin surfaced paths have been completed at this site to improve links from residential areas to the north of the woods to the improved parish play facilities to the south.

Green Flag

Three sites have been entered for Green Flag Awards this year: Lily Hill Park, Popes Meadow and Shepherd Meadows/Sandhurst Memorial Park.

Results will be announced on 28th July

Landscape Design

The Elms

Section 106 funded access improvement works and new planting have been undertaken at The Elms Park, working closely with Bracknell Town Council.

A new path into the site with safer crossing across the car park and linking to the paths inside the site has been completed by Ringway.

Planting works have been undertaken directly by BTC to designs prepared by our Landscape Design Officer.

Car Parking projects

The service has been involved with the highways engineer led parking space projects on BFC and BFH land in the preparation of planting schemes and specifications. There are a number of small schemes in the pipeline to be planted up this autumn. Landscaping is being carried out by Landscape Services.

Great Hollands Neighbourhood Centre

The service has been involved in the landscape design for proposed environmental improvements to the shopping centre including installation of planters, the planting and replacing of trees and new co-ordinated street furniture and signage. The first phase of these improvements will be implemented following construction of the new Youth Centre in Great Hollands Square.

Other

A planting scheme was also prepared for the bin store proposed for Easthampstead House, and a small scheme for Crowthorne Childrens Centre has been drawn up to support the planning application.

Bracknell in Bloom and Your Gardens Competition

The service has been involved in preparations for Bracknell in Bloom.

Parks and Countryside have supported the Landscape Services officers' work.

With the new Projects Officer in post since 21st June, the service has been able to support Landscape Services with the latter stages of the Your Gardens Competition, visiting and short listing entries for judging later in the year.

Planning and Strategic Consultation

Jennett's Park

As Jennett's Park continues to develop on site, and planning applications are accelerating for the remaining residential parcels, the service is involved in regular liaison with The Consortium's consultants and the design teams for the various parcels.

As well as commenting on biodiversity, landscape and rights of way issues, the open spaces, woods and play areas that will be adopted and managed by Parks and Countryside need to be monitored throughout the design, planning and implementation stages.

The countryside park is nearing completion with a path construction contract due to start this summer. A brief for the public art in three locations in open spaces has been agreed with the Consortium.

Priory Field

A contractor was appointed following submission of three quotations.

Cultivation, regrading and seeding work has taken place in accordance with the Institute Of Groundsmanship specification.

The pitch is currently undergoing a period of establishment maintenance by the contractor, with the target of being playable by September 2010.

As with earlier stages, achieving this will be weather dependent.

Libraries, Arts and Heritage

The Library and Information Service continued to promote the service to the public through a series of events and activities across the Borough. Highlights at various libraries included:

Sandhurst

Lemony Snickett family day in May
John Connelly author event - 78 attended
Football Family Quiz Day

Crowthorne

65 children attended Easter craft events

Over 60 parents and children now attend the weekly Bounce and Rhyme sessions

Christina Jones author event in April

Binfield

Around 30 children attend weekly after-school activity club.

Great Hollands

Family History author event

Bracknell Library

WiFi is now available to the public

Whitegrove Library

Work began at Whitegrove Library on a re-furbishment project. All existing lighting is being replaced and the ceiling lowered. A new counter has been installed along with new shelving and computer area. WiFi will also be made available in August.

Arts and Heritage

Crowthorne Carnival – extensive preparations with 27 enthusiastic young people. Working alongside Street Processions led to the group winning first prize in the youth category at the carnival and 14 of those young people are doing ASDAN activities award.

Milestones – both milestones are now restored at Lily Hill Park and outside the Red Lion in Bracknell.

Leisure

The difficult financial climate continues to impact on local residents and users of leisure facilities. Without doubt the facilities are feeling the impact, but continue to rise to the challenge in an increasingly competitive market. Overall attendances were slightly down on the same period in the previous year.

Bracknell Leisure Centre was marginally down on last year, but a marketing campaign to attract more gym users proved successful. In June the DCMSS announced the cessation of the free swimming programme, but the impact of this will not be felt until later in the year.

The Downshire Golf Complex continues to work hard to hold its own in an increasingly competitive market, whilst Coral Reef has enjoyed an excellent first quarter, increasing usage by over 1%.

Easthampstead Park Conference Centre has endured a challenging time as local companies rationalise their conferencing. The Look Out continues to be popular with attendances to the exhibition once again showing an increase. Overall visits to the site have fallen slightly, but this will not have been helped by the cold and damp weather early in the period. Edgbarrow Sports Centre was partially re-opened on 26th April following the fire just before Christmas and will fully re-open on 19th July.

Horseshoe Lake opened for the season in April and has already shown a good level of bookings. Harmans Water Leisure Centre has shown steady usage with good uptake on their core business of gym users and the school swimming programme.

The 2010 Quintiles/Bracknell Half Marathon was once again very popular with a record number of finishes.

The Young People in Sport Scheme enjoyed several very successful events, including athletics and Kwik cricket. The Special Sports Fun Day at Bracknell Leisure Centre was a splendid event with resource centres from across Berkshire taking part.

PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES

Administration

We met our targets during the quarter, including the review of 840 Tree Preservation Order files. We processed 41 Freedom of Information requests for the department and continued monthly letter sampling. We prepared and issued procedure notes for workstation risk assessments. The Document Management Team started scanning Housing Options' daily post. The Department's postal function is now managed centrally by Corporate Services.

Business Systems

We completed upgrades on the Confirm IT system used by highways, trees, landscape and network management and SPOCC, the IT system used by the supporting people service. M3 used by environmental health and trading standards & licensing was upgraded to meet changes in legislation on 1st April. The financial module on choice based letting IT system was implemented as well as the address loader, FSS UK and AMES for M3. The address loader manages property address on M3, while the interfaces enable food samples to be downloaded from the Food Standards Agency and animal welfare information to be exchanged electronically with DEFRA.

We started work on a major IT project to upgrade the Corporate GIS system. This includes a new Intranet based GIS Explorer for all of the Council's staff. We continued to support the current Corporate GIS system and produce numerous maps for the department.

We started creating and migrating the department's online forms to the new corporate online form system. We were involved in creating web content for the BFC|my job search web site being set up by housing options. This site will help people on the housing register find employment. We started working with the library service on their new online catalogue product.

e+ Smartcard Programme

Software was implemented at Coral Reef that allows visits loaded into the e+ card management system by social services clients to be spent by passing their smart card over a card reader.

The term 'older persons' rather than 'over 60's' has been adopted for services targeted at retired people to accommodate the sliding age eligibility recently introduced for the concessionary fares card. All web site references etc. related to 'over 60's' services have been updated.

Surrey librarians were given a demonstration of how SmartConnect would work in libraries to enrol people for a Surrey ENCTS bus pass if Surrey opts to buy a SmartConnect licence from Bracknell.

Demonstrations were also hosted for Lincolnshire, Cheshire West and Chester. The 2010 -2011 Discount Directory refresh was launched. The number of participants is set to rise again this year.

Finance

In addition to the core functions of accounting, budget monitoring, financial advice and debt control the main task in this quarter was to close the accounts for the financial year 2009/10, which was completed within the agreed deadlines.

Human Resources

HR continued to positively support the Job Evaluation scheme at every level from presence on Steering Group to supporting employees complete Job Information Questionnaires.

Mentor training was delivered for both mentors and mentees and the scheme officially started with all mentees attending at least one of the six mentoring sessions.

The team actively supported the Future Jobs Fund Scheme by organising a series of workshops, ensuring the young people are supported in their day to day work and sorting any issues. Much had been learned that could be used in the future. Unfortunately the Government has pulled the funding for this scheme.

Work has been undertaken on improving stress in the department. A number of stress risk assessments have been successfully completed.

The team worked hard to ensure a smooth process was in place for managing change required as a result of grant reductions.

HR supported two employees in the car parking team in their TUPE transfer to Vinci Park.

The team undertook a project on CRB checks for employees who had previously held a CRB from another organisation.

Work which had been planned for ISA registration was halted as the Government is reviewing its approach to Safeguarding.

This quarter the recruitment activity has mainly been focussed on the leisure sites, for posts such as Assistant Greenkeeper and Golf Shop Assistant at Downshire, Receptionists at Coral Reef and Bracknell Leisure Centre, Leisure Attendants at Edgbarrow and Sandhurst, and a Conference Porter at Easthampstead Park Conference Centre. We have also recruited a new Projects Officer within Parks and Countryside, and a Transport Planning Officer within Spatial Policy.

The team has continued to support managers on a range of complex staffing issues and formal hearings. This quarter there have been 8 formal hearings: 5 disciplinary, 2 performance improvement/capability hearings. We also supported managers, through the provision of advice and guidance, for a number of informal sickness and performance issues.

Contracts

Engineering Consultancy Contracts (Jacobs Babbie Replacement)

In quarter 1 all outstanding contracts except for Bridges were signed and are now in use.

A mini-competition was held for the Bridges & Structures Contract through the South East Pan Government Collaborative Highways Professional Services Framework. Tenders were received from three of the four suppliers to the Framework and evaluation has been completed.

Car Park Management Contract

The contract has now been signed.

Transfer of the multi-storey car parks and enforcement to the successful bidder, Vinci Park, happened on the 1st July.

Mercury Abatement/Replacement Cremators Contract

This quarter we completed the evaluation of returned tenders, award was approved and contracts are being drawn up. Liaison between the Council and the successful supplier, Facultatieve Technologies, has started for the purpose of ensuring that the preliminary work to be done by the Council dovetails with that to be done early in 2011 by Facultatieve.

South Hill Park Contract

In quarter 1, planning approval for the tendered scheme was obtained and the contract documents were completed. We are unable to sign contracts until approval of the tendered scheme has been confirmed by Thames Water.

Refuse Collection Contract

In quarter 1 we completed the pre-qualification process. Specification and contract terms were completed, which required more work than planned. Tender documents were issued to the 5 organisations which have been invited to tender.

Equalities

We worked with colleagues throughout the Council to complete the work that allowed us to successfully gain the achieving level of the equalities standard on 2 July. This work involved colleagues across the department preparing case studies and attending interviews with the inspectors.

We completed the equalities training for all managers in the department who did not receive the training in the winter. We published the Equalities Impact Assessment for development management.

Business Continuity

We completed the annual update of the flu pandemic plan in the quarter.

Performance Management

We supported implementation of the new performance management system in April and produced the quarter 4 2009/10 performance management statistics using the system. We continued to work with corporate colleagues on developing a strategy to extend the system's use.

We finalised the 2010/11 service plan in the quarter.

All employees in the department had their annual appraisal in the quarter ensuring Service Plan objectives pass down to individual objectives across the department.

Customer Care

We published the officer/member charter for customer care initiated in our joint workshops in the autumn. We launched some new BORIS pages on customer care to help our staff improve their customer care.

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT

Building Control

The pilot scheme Building Control were taking part in for the CLG for risk assessing Building Regulations applications has concluded. The team were questioned by CLG representatives for their opinion on how it went and the results of this will be used to shape the development of a forthcoming risk assessment guidance document from CLG.

There is the possibility that this guidance will be linked in with the new Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations which came in to force on 1 April 2010. Work has been underway in investigating and planning how best to develop and implement a new charging scheme at Bracknell in order to comply with the new regulations, including developing a new time recording system. All Local Authority Building Control sections have to adopt this by 1 October 2010 and this is the planned date for implementation at Bracknell. It means the charging structure must be more transparent and justified under a 'user pays' principle.

We have been fortunate to sign up two more partners under the LABC Partnership scheme bringing in more work from outside of our geographical area.

A member of the team has attended a course run by the Building Research Establishment and sat the examination to become an accredited Code for Sustainable Homes Assessor. The results of this are due in July. It is hoped this will lead to a route for earlier consultation with housing developers to secure a Building Regulations application rather than lose it to the private sector, and generate a potential new revenue stream by charging for Code for Sustainable homes advice and assessment.

.Land Charges

With the incoming coalition government, HIPS was scrapped and so the number of Personal Search requests dropped immediately. There has been a small swing to

the take up of Official Searches in preference as search purchases swing from point of sale to point of purchase.

Development Management

The first quarter has seen a significant rise in planning fee income and if the current level of activity remains then the service will not be experiencing the budget pressures it faced last year

A review of the entire planning service commenced in the quarter known as Managing Excellent Planning Service project (MEPS), which includes reviewing the following:

- decision making procedures and arrangements
- public consultation and engagement arrangements
- current arrangements for enforcement and compliance.
- accessibility of the service to users including introduction of a Planning Alert system for the public and overhaul of the planning web pages
- priorities for the service
- opportunities for different methods for delivery

The review is looking closely at how the service uses resources and its processes and procedures, with all staff who are employed in the planning service or contribute to it through specialist advice (e.g. trees and transportation) having been involved in a time recording exercise during May. This review is linked with other reviews being undertaken by planning services across the country (currently some 40 authorities' are involved with this project). By comparing with other planning authorities using consistent data collection methods the Council will gain a far better understanding of how resources are used and the choices that the Council needs to make in terms of priorities in a time of restraint.

The quarter also saw the service working with CLG on the performance indicator pilot, an exercise which also will contribute to the data collection informing the service review – this project received a small amount of funding from CLG. Another successfully completed task was the provision a resource base on the intranet (BORIS) to assist other departments in their dealings with the Development Management Service.

A number of Planning Officers during the quarter attended a programme of urban design training led by Professor Ian Bentley of Oxford Brookes University; a programme was also attended by officers from other planning services in Berkshire and Hampshire.

During the quarter the enforcement function of the service remained high profile and following a Ministerial letter regarding unauthorised breaches of planning regulations occurring over Bank Holidays arrangement have been put in place to ensure enforcement staff and legal back up are on stand by at these periods.

Arising from the increasing number of breaches of planning regulations a number of legal actions and enforcement actions will in the coming months place demands on the services resources, both staff time and financially .

On the development front the Bracknell Town Centre remains the key p riority for the service with an applicat ion anticipated (following an EIA screening Request) for an

extension of time in which BRP can implement the outline planning permission granted in 2007. Activity continues to be centred on proposals for a number of 3rd party sites, including continuing pre-application negotiation on the Bracknell Health Space

Spatial Policy

Work has again focused on the preparation of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD). This document was intended to identify land to accommodate the balance of the 12780 dwellings allocated to the Borough in the South East and be accompanied by an Infrastructure Plan.

Work on the project in this quarter included completion of a major options consultation which ran from February-April 2010. This first stage included preparation of major participation document, use of an on-line consultation system, a series of manned exhibitions around the Borough and a workshop with the Local Strategic Partnership. A second stage of consultation was held during May consisting of four local sessions to look at the development potential of the eight possible strategic locations in more detail. These were facilitated by the consultants appointed to carry out masterplanning work on the potential sites and have informed their work in producing concept and masterplans. Work on the Infrastructure Delivery Plan has continued and schedules of infrastructure required for the potential sites have been prepared on the basis of the housing numbers in the options consultation.

Consultation commenced on the Streetscene Supplementary Planning Document.

Changes in government policy, particularly the announcements that the South East Plan is soon to be abolished has created uncertainty about the most appropriate programme and is likely, at the very least, to cause some delay in progress on the SADPD the Thames Basin Heaths SPA SPD and the replacement for the Limiting the Impact of Development SPD..

Climate Change and Carbon Management

The revised Climate Change Action Plan from April 2010 was approved by CMT in June 2010 and is scheduled for the Executive meeting on 13th July 2010.

A follow-up meeting was held between CAMCO consultants and the Group Accountant to clarify the financial modelling used in the feasibility study for a district heating scheme between Bracknell Leisure Centre and adjacent sites. Subject to approval by the Carbon Management Board, a report will be scheduled on the Executive Work Plan.

A site visit to the potential wind turbine site off Longshot Lane revealed that there was a better site access from Cain Road. Partnerships for Renewables revised their site plan accordingly and submitted proposed terms for an option to lease the site for a detailed feasibility study.

Provisional year end energy data 2009/10 shows an energy consumption reduction of 8%, resulting in a 5% reduction of CO₂ from council buildings. Schools consumption reduced by 2% resulting in a 1% reduction of CO₂.

The mandatory Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme commenced 1st April 2010. Preparation is underway to submit registration for the

scheme by 30th September 2010 and to implement the Early Action Metric measures by March 2011. These consist of voluntary Automatic Meter Readers (AMRs) installed and accreditation with the Carbon Trust Standard. CMT have approved funding for this installation.

CMT approved participation in the EU funded LoCUS project (Low Carbon Understanding for Small and Medium Enterprises). Meetings have been scheduled to introduce the project to the Bracknell Forest Partnership and other key participants.

Executive members approved participation in a Low Carbon Network Fund bid with Scottish and Southern Energy. Officers are meeting with SSE to help scope out the project for a bid due at the end of August.

Transport Management Section

Transport Implementation Group

Local Transport Plan 3

- Work has now been completed on identifying challenges and measures to meet our new objectives. This work was carried out internally and with these in mind we can work towards a more sustainable transport system that is capable of meeting the needs of our community, economy and environment. These results were published in second e-Newsletter which can be found on our dedicated LTP3 website www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/LTP3
- Officers are now working on strategies which we will be consulting on later this year. These include Demand Management and Travel Choice, walking and cycling, Travel to school, Traffic Management, Parking, Freight, Road Safety, Accessibility and Passenger Transport.
- In early June a presentation was made to the Local Strategic Partnership and a workshop was held where tables were asked what they would do to try to meet the challenges and achieve the goals set out and why, bearing in mind the national goals. This proved a valuable exercise with participants providing some useful comments which will be taken into consideration when forming the strategies

Bracknell Railway Station Improvement Work:

- Works are now completed on the new station forecourt with improvements for all modes of interchange including, importantly, for pedestrians. New features also include a larger taxi rank, corporate bus bay and shelter, improved cycle parking facilities, additional short term car parking, a new pedestrian crossing, improved lighting and new seating and landscaping

Transport Model:

- The 2026 transport model is being used to test future housing options around the borough to identify the likely trip generation and distribution that will result from such developments. It also assesses alternative road configurations that best accommodate the traffic generated or displaced by the development. This exercise enables the council to identify key locations in the transport network that will require developer contributions towards improvements.
- The model is also being used in to assess several alternative proposals to redevelop the Broadmoor Hospital site, and will provide input to a Transport Assessment for a development at Amen Corner and Warfield.
- The base year AM Peak VISSIM micro-simulation of the A322/A329 corridor is nearing completion. This model will assist in a programme of improvements proposed along that corridor. A similar model is being developed to represent the PM Peak hour once this is complete. Verkehr in Stadtten Simulation translated into English means "Traffic in cities simulation" (VISSIM) models will also be developed to represent the A329 London Road corridor.

- Following the VISSI M testing of improvement options for the Sports Centre roundabout on the A322, the preferred option is now being implemented. The approach flares on all arms are being widened and signal ducts are being added on the Bagshot Road north and south arms for future signalisation.

Travel in Bracknell Report

- The 2010 Travel in Bracknell Report is being produced. The objective of the report is to establish changes in the level of travel and traffic flow and to compare these to the targets set out in the 2006 – 2011 Local Transport Plan. The report shows we are well on our way to reach those targets set with increases in Cycling, Rail and Bus Patronage. Once complete the report will be published on the BFC website.

Passenger Transport

- A number of 'Kick Start' schemes were announced by DfT, not including the scheme proposed by BFBC for enhanced Sunday buses in the Bracknell urban area. While no formal notification has been received that our bid was not successful, it seems reasonable to assume that there will be no further action.
- The 2010 – 11 Concessionary Travel Scheme was published in accordance with statutory requirements, and the timescale for any operator challenges has now passed. A minor enhancement to the Scheme was agreed with First to take effect in May 2010 in respect of travel on Green Line coaches towards London in the morning, following a timetable change.
- The total number of bus passenger journeys starting in the Borough (indicator NI 177) in 2009/10 was 1,765,968. This represents a 4.6 % decrease on last year's reported figure (1,850,154) and is lower than both the LTP and LPSA Targets for the year. There was a national picture of falling bus use in the year (2.4 % in English non-metropolitan areas.) The national economic picture is undoubtedly one factor in this, the other is the particularly severe winter, with bus services in the Borough being particularly badly affected for a week in December 2009 and two weeks in January 2010, with no buses at all able to run on some days.
- Bus punctuality (which excluded data gathered during the extreme weather) and bus passenger satisfaction also both fell slightly in 2009/10.
- New contracts with Thames Travel for the operation of a number of services in the Borough (mainly the north Bracknell network) were implemented from 29 May 2010, with a fleet of new, fully wheelchair accessible, midibuses entering service on or soon after the start of the contract. Other than a few minor initial issues, the changes seem to have been welcomed by the public, with very little feedback being received.
- A number of changes to commercial services were made at the same time, with Courtney Coaches introducing two Sunday shopping hours services in Bracknell, and First altering some services.

Travel Choice

- Walk to Work Week was promoted to both council staff and local employers during the last week of April
- A new e-Newsletter 'Smart Moves' was launched in April and circulated to local businesses highlighting sustainable travel initiatives and news. A copy is also available on the public web site.
- Walk to school week was well supported by local primary schools in mid May. Pupils were issued with diaries which included different activities for each day of the week, and resources and downloads for parents and teachers were available on the public web site.
- All modes of sustainable travel, but especially news about the new Thames Travel bus services, were promoted to residents and shoppers in Bracknell Forest on Saturday 8th May as part of a Friend's of the Earth 'Eco Day' event in the town centre
- Cycling was heavily promoted in the run up to and during Bike Week (19 – 27 June). Events included a very successful day at Kennel Lane Special school where parents and pupils were given the chance to try out a range of specially adapted bikes, a general cycling promotion in the canteen at Panasonic, a public bike try-out roadshow in the town centre, the launch of the Red Route cycle corridor (including radio coverage on Berkshire FM), and a Bike to Work competition for council staff and local residents and employees
- Work on Travel Plans secured via the planning process including a review meeting with 3M to discuss their Travel Plan, and meetings and discussions to consider applications from The Peel Centre and Jennets Park School

Engineering Projects and Adoptions Group

In the Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Programme:-

- Plans were drafted for improvements at prioritised schools such as St Margaret Clitherow RC School, Wooden Hill Primary School, Wildridings, Foxhill, Cranbourne and Ranelagh
- A programme of school gate assessments was commenced

In the Public Transport Programme:

- Design work continued on a bus stop footway link along Church Rd, Winkfield

In the Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements Programme:

- Works were completed on the footway/cycletrack link on the south side of Wokingham Road between Turnpike Road Roundabout and Stoney Rd.
- Preliminary design work commenced on a number of footway/cycletrack schemes in Larges Bridge Drive, London Road, Peacock Lane and Beehive Lane

In the Residential Street Parking Programme:

- Detailed designs were carried out on a third phase of off-street parking including Halewood, Highfield, Nutley, Pembroke, Lily Hill Road, Deepfield Road and Oakegates
- Works were completed on the second phase of off-street parking schemes in Ollerton, Waverley, Rosedale Gardens and Balfour Crescent.

Section 278 Highway Works:

- Works commenced in May on the new A329 Roundabout and Spur Road as part of the Jennett's Park Development off-site highway improvement works

Traffic and Safety Group

Casualty Reduction – Local Safety Schemes:

Feasibility and design work is underway on the following schemes:

- A3095 Foresters Way / Magdelene Road Roundabout
- Running Horse Roundabout

Construction has been completed on the Local Safety /Capacity Improvement Scheme to signalise Pitt's Bridge.

Other Traffic Management Schemes:

Works have been ordered for the following:

- Western Road / Downshire Way bus gate (phase 2 – traffic signalisation)
- Pedestrian radar review at signalised crossings (phase 1/2)

Feasibility / Preliminary design work has started on the following schemes:

- Horse & Groom Roundabout - Capacity Improvement
- Doncastle Road / A329 Berkshire Way Roundabout - Capacity Improvement
- Coral Reef Junction - Capacity Improvement
- A329 London Road (Ascot) j/w Priority Road and Fernbank Road - Capacity Improvement
- 20 mph speed limits

Speed surveys have been completed and the assessment is on-going for the following:

- Speed assessment of Locally Important Roads (phase 1)

Negotiations are on-going with landowners at Maidens Green Crossroads regarding the introduction of traffic signals.

Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO):

The next on-street parking restriction TRO has been formally advertised and the objections received are currently being considered.

The TRO for revised waiting restrictions in Bull Lane awaiting final approval by the Executive Member.

Road Safety Education, Training & Publicity:

The following Education, Training and Publicity activities have taken place:

- 'Older & Wiser' Driver's Event
- School Crossing Patroller training
- Parent talks in schools and day centres
- Road Safety Road Show for Primary Schools
- Road Safety Educational Presentations for key local businesses
- 'Inter-School Road Safety Quiz'
- New off-road Cycle Training implementation
- 'Teddy Bears Picnic' – pre-school event
- 'Own Goal' summer Drink Drive event

Highway Network Management

Occupation of the Highway

Street works may be conducted during a time called the reasonable period as agreed between the street authority and the statutory undertaker. In real terms this is the period determined by the actual start date of works and the proposed completion date in their notice subject to any challenge by the street authority. The performance of statutory undertakers in this regard for the 1st Quarter of 2010/11 has resulted in 117 days unreasonable occupation of the highway and 40 days for the highway authority. The number of duration challenges issued by the street authority has meant a saving of at least 85 days of occupation of the highway.

Street Works Inspections

The quality and safety of street works is measured by random sample inspections, the quarterly results of which should show less than 10% failure rate at each inspection category. The red highlighted figures are likely to result in either warnings or enforcement action.

Administration

The Highway Network Management have received 7522 notices during Qtr 1 2010/11 which is an annual increase of 46% for statutory undertakers and 475% for the highway authority as works promoter. From October 2009 onwards fixed penalty notices were introduced in a phased approach for street works noticing offences. During the Qtr 1 period a total of 53 FPN's were issued to undertakers amounting to a potential income of between £4240 to £6360 a further 3 received warnings. The highway authority as works promoter triggered 146 potential offences in this period.

Annex H: Integrated Transport Schemes Progress to 31 December 2009

Highway Network Management

Utility Passed	Category A				Category B				Category C			
	Failed Defective	Total Samples	Failed Defective %	Passed	Failed Defective	Total Samples	Failed Defective %	Passed	Failed Defective	Total Samples	Failed Defective %	Passed
BT Openreach	48	0	48	0	20	8	28	29	9	0	9	0
National Grid Gas	63		9	33	10	12	22	55	0	0	0	0
Scottish & Southern Energy	21	1	22	5	16	1	17	6	2	0	2	0
South East Water	37	0	37	0	97	1	98	1	11	0	11	0
Southern Gas Networks	22		4	50	1	0	1	0	2	0	2	0
Thames Water	1	0	1	0	3	0	3	0	2	0	2	0
Veolia Water	4	0	4	0	3	1	4	25	6	1	7	14
Virgin Media	7	1	8	13	7	1	8	13	2	0	2	0
Bracknell Forest Council	24		24	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
BFC SEC Electrical Maintenance	10		1	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
TOTAL 151		7	158		157	24	181		34	1	35	

Poor performance enforcement action may follow.

Adequate overall performance but continued monitoring recommended.

Good performance.

Subject	Team	Area	Description	Status	Finish	Comments
DEMAND MANAGEMENT AND TRAVEL CHOICE						
Mobility Improvements	EP&A	Various	Programme of local improvements and removals of barriers to movement	Ongoing N/A	N/A	Various mobility improvements to be implemented throughout the year eg dropped kerbs, ramps etc...Areas around housing for elderly people to be targeted this year.
HIGHWAY CAPACITY AND ROAD SPACE ALLOCATION						
Bracknell Sports Centre Roundabout Capacity Improvement	TI - EP&A	Bracknell	Design and construction	Works in progress	Jun-10 Sep-10	
A322 Swinley Bottom to A329(M) Corridor Work Ph2 (Package Development)	TI leading	Various	Over the year work will comprise detailed VISSIM modelling of corridor and testing various scenarios including LDF site allocations	Package development work in progress	N/A N/A	Base year scenario currently being validated. VISSIM modelling underway
A329 Coppid Beech to Junction of London Rd/Fernbank Rd Corridor Work Ph2 (Package Development)	TI leading	Various	Over the year work will comprise detailed VISSIM modelling of corridor and testing various scenarios including LDF site allocations	Package development work in progress	N/A	Base year scenario currently being validated. VISSIM modelling underway

Subject	Team	Area	Description	Status	Finish	Comments
Capacity/Congestion Improvements at Signalised Crossings Phase 2	T&S	Various	Improvements to signalised crossing radar detection equipment for pedestrian movement to reduce unnecessary traffic delays and congestion.	Work in hand	N/A N/A	
Berkshire Way/Doncastle Rd Rbt Capacity Improvement (Scheme Development)	T&S	Binfield	Over the year work will include design, topographical surveys and stats info/diversion costs.	Investigation work underway	N/A N/A	
Coral Reef Rbt Capacity Improvement (Scheme Development)	T&S	Bracknell Winkfield	Over the year work will include design, topographical surveys and stats info/diversion costs.	Investigation work underway	N/A N/A	
Easthampstead Rd/Western Rd Junction Improvement (Scheme Design)	T&S	Bracknell	Over the year work will include drafting a scheme for an improved priority junction capable of later signalisation to enable developer funding to be identified.	Investigation work underway.	N/A N/A	

Subject	Team	Area	Description	Status	Finish	Comments
London Rd Dualling (Priority Rd to Fernbank Rd) (Scheme Design)	T&S	Winkfield	Over the year work will include design, topographical surveys and stats info/diversion costs.	Investigation work underway	N/A N/A	
Horse and Groom Rbt Capacity Improvement (Scheme Development and Advanced Utility Company Diversions)	T&S Bracknell	Winkfield	Work this year will include design, topographical survey and advanced stats diversions.	Investigation work underway	N/A N/A	
TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT						
UTMC Development Phase 2	T&S	Various	Strategy completion and initialisation this year	Work in progress		
Maidens Green Crossroads Traffic Signals	T&S	Winkfield	Implementation of signalised priority junction	Third party land negotiations underway	TBA TBA	
Dukes Ride Speed Management Scheme	T&S C	rowthorne	Additional Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS)	Preliminary design	Oct 11	Oct 11

Subject	Team	Area	Description	Status	Finish	Comments
Speed Management Scheme	T&S Win	kfield	Winkfield Row area	Concept design	Feb 11	
Gateway Signing Ph 3	T&S Win	kfield	Winkfield Row area (subject to member consultation)	Concept design	Feb 11	
Easthamstead Road junction with /Old Wokingham Rd	T&S	Bracknell	Improvements to visibility at junction	Consultation with Land Owner	TBA	
Assessment of speed limits on B class Roads	T&S	Various	The assessment of the suitability of the existing speed limits on B class Roads.	Finalising results	N/A	Site visits to highlighted problem roads
On-street Parking Traffic Regulation Order	T&S	Various	Waiting restriction TRO	Assessing objections	Aug 10	
PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLING						
Cycle Network Signing Ph2	EP&A	Various	Next phase of recently approved cycle network signage to be designed and implemented later this year.	Preliminary investigation stage on next route to be signed		

Subject	Team	Area	Description	Status	Finish	Comments
London Road Footway/Cycletrack (Shoulder of Mutton to John Nike Way)	EP&A	Binfield	Widen footway to create new shared surface footway/cycletrack	Scheme submitted for stage 2 safety audit		
London Road Footway/Cycletrack & Signalised Crossing (Coppid Beech)	EP&A	Binfield	New footway/cycletrack and signalised crossing	Preliminary investigation stage		
New Forest Ride Signalised Crossing	EP&A		New signalised crossing	Preliminary investigation stage		
Watersplash Lane/Sunninghill Road Footway/Cycletrack Link into Park	EP&A		New footway/cycletrack link from Watersplash Lane into the Great Park.	Preliminary investigation stage		Compliments footway/cycletrack planned by RBWM
Eastern Gate Footway/Cycletrack Improvement (Feasibility Study)	EP&A		Feasibility work into possible improvements to the existing footway/cycletrack	Preliminary investigation stage		

Subject	Team	Area	Description	Status	Finish	Comments
Beehive Lane Footway/Cycletrack Improvement	EP&A		Improvements to existing footway/cycletrack in conjunction with new development in the area	Preliminary investigation stage		
Larges Bridge Drive Footway/Cycletrack	EP&A		Footway/cycletrack link from proposed signalised crossing in Broad Lane to Larges Bridge Drive	Consultation stage		
Subject Team		Area	Description	Status	Finish	Comments
Peacock Lane Footway/Cycletrack (Wykery Copse to Peacock Roundabout)	EP&A		Footway/cycletrack link from Jennett's Park and Wykery Copse to Peacock Roundabout	Preliminary investigation stage		
LOCAL SAFETY SCHEMES						
Running Horse Rbt (Circulatory) Improvements	T&S Brack	nell	Visibility improvements	Preliminary design	Oct 10	Oct 10

Subject	Team	Area	Description	Status	Finish	Comments
A3095 (Magdalene Rd Junction) Improvements	T&S	Saridhu	Defection and signage improvements	Preliminary design	Feb 11	Feb 11
PUBLIC TRANSPORT - BUS AND RAIL TRAVEL						
Bus Contracts	TI	Various	Re-tender of bus service 53 / 53A, consideration of service to The Parks in line with Section 106 Agreement.	Analysing survey data and liaising with neighbouring councils.		Tenders for 53 being evaluated
Concessionary Fares	TI	All	Continue to monitor budget effects of April 2008 changes to Scheme; Resolve reimbursement for 'Green Line' services	Discussions with First and neighbouring authorities. Defining scheme for 2009/10		1. Revisions to publicity material and website completed to achieve better integration with e+card. 2. NFI data sharing measures completed on schedule
Bus Stop Location Data	TI	All	Reconciliation between NAPTRAN data held by Transept (consultants), GIS Section and current position on the ground	Some survey work underway.		
Quality Partnership and Punctuality Improvement	TI	All	Implementation of Partnerships	QP documents being prepared.		

Subject	Team	Area	Description	Status	Finish	Comments
Partnership						
Bus Stop Imps - Connecting Paths	EP&A	Various	Public transport accessibility improvements.	Preliminary investigation stage		
Bus Priority Measures	T&S	Various	Western Rd / Downshire Way Bus Gate	Signals equipment ordered		
Church Road Footway	EP&A	Wink field	Connecting path to Bus Stop	Member Consultation Stage		Consultation work in progress
Bracknell Railway Station	EP&A	Bracknell Town	Forecourt Enhancements	Main works complete		Feature lighting design work in progress
PARKING						
Residential Street Parking	EP&A	Borough	Residential parking improvement schemes	Works ongoing		Rolling programme
SUSTAINABLE MODES OF TRAVEL TO SCHOOL (SMOTTS)						
Infrastructure Improvements at Prioritised Schools	EP&A	Various	Infrastructure Improvements at Prioritised Schools	Programme of school gate		Improvement schemes also being worked up on high

Subject	Team	Area	Description	Status	Finish	Comments
				assessments underway.		ranking schools for implementation later in the year.
MISCELLANEOUS						
New Developers Guide	EP&A	N/A	Preparation of new highway design guide for developers	Work in progress		Draft guide out to consultation
Jennett's Park	EP&A	Bracknell Binfield	Administration of S38 agreements and inspection of works	Work in progress		
Jennett's Park	EP&A	Bracknell Binfield	Supervision of S278 - A329 Roundabout Works	Works in progress on site	May 10	Feb 11
Staff College	EP&A	Bracknell	Administration of S38 agreements and inspection of works	Work in progress		
Two Orchards	EP&A	Bracknell	Preparation of S278 agreement and inspection of works	Works part complete		Works completed at the Western Rd/ Cain Rd junction. The improvements at Easthampstead Rd / Western Rd junction to follow.
Sandy Lane School	EP&A	Bracknell	Project management of highway improvements on behalf of the school as part of their expansion programme	Complete		

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ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 5 OCTOBER 2010

HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFITS SERVICE INSPECTION REPORT

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the report resulting from the inspection of the Council's Housing and Council Tax Benefits Service by the Audit Commission in September 2010. The inspection report is attached for the Panel's consideration.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the attached inspection report of the Council's Housing and Council Tax Benefits Service be considered by the Panel.**

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Audit Commission inspection of the Benefits Service took place in May this year and the related report is attached. Following submission of a self-assessment the Service was inspected over a week including interviews with the Executive Member for Finance, Resources and Assets, Councillor Ward, the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing, Councillor Dale Birch, the Chairman of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Finnie, and the Chairman of the Housing and Council Tax Benefits Working Group, Councillor Finch.
- 3.2 Members may remember from the reports to the Panel that the Audit Commission inspection regime was a harder test than the previous Comprehensive Performance Assessment model. Thus over the last year a benefit improvement plan has been in place steered by the Housing and Council Tax Benefits Working Group.
- 3.3 The Audit Commission inspection is a snapshot of our on going journey towards the delivery of an excellent Benefits Service. Therefore, it is gratifying that they have recognised the improvements that have been made recently and that our prospects for improving still further are promising. The recommendations from the inspection cover work that is already in hand or planned and again it is reassuring that the Audit Commission has confirmed the Service is heading in the right direction.
- 3.4 Four of the six Benefits Services in Berkshire have now been inspected. Windsor and Maidenhead was inspected in November 2008 and achieved fair with uncertain prospects for improvement. Slough was inspected in May 2010 and achieved a poor rating with promising prospects for improvement and West Berkshire achieved fair with uncertain prospects for improvement in May 2010. The Bracknell Forest score is the best score achieved in Berkshire to date.
- 3.5 A response to the Inspection report and the recommendations will be reported to the November meeting of the Executive.

Background Papers

None.

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Benefits

Service

Inspection

Bracknell Forest Council

September 2010



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Service inspections

This inspection has been carried out by the Audit Commission under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999 and is in line with the Audit Commission's strategic regulation principles. These principles embody the objectives of our Strategic Plan and Strategic Regulation. They also reflect the principles from *The Government's Policy on Inspection of Public Services (July 2003)*. Audit Commission service inspections should:

- focus on public service outcomes from a user perspective;
- act as a catalyst to help inspected bodies improve their performance;
- concentrate inspection work where it will have most impact, so that it is proportionate and based on an assessment of risk;
- be based on a rigorous assessment of costs and benefits, with a concern for achieving value for money both by the inspected organisation and within the inspection regime itself;
- be, and be seen to be, independent of the inspected organisation;
- report in public, using impartial evidence to inform the public about the performance of public services so as to enhance accountability;
- involve collaborative working with other inspectorates and external review agencies to achieve greater coordination and a more holistic approach to the assessment of performance by audited and inspected bodies;
- share learning to create a common understanding of performance that encourages rigorous self assessment and better understanding of their performance by inspected organisations;
- be carried out objectively by skilled and experienced people to high standards and using relevant evidence, transparent criteria, and open review processes; and
- enable continuous learning so that inspections can become increasingly effective and efficient.

We assess services using published key lines of enquiry (KLOE) to inform our judgements. The KLOEs can be found on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk.

This report is issued in accordance with the Audit Commission's duty under section 13 of the 1999 Act.

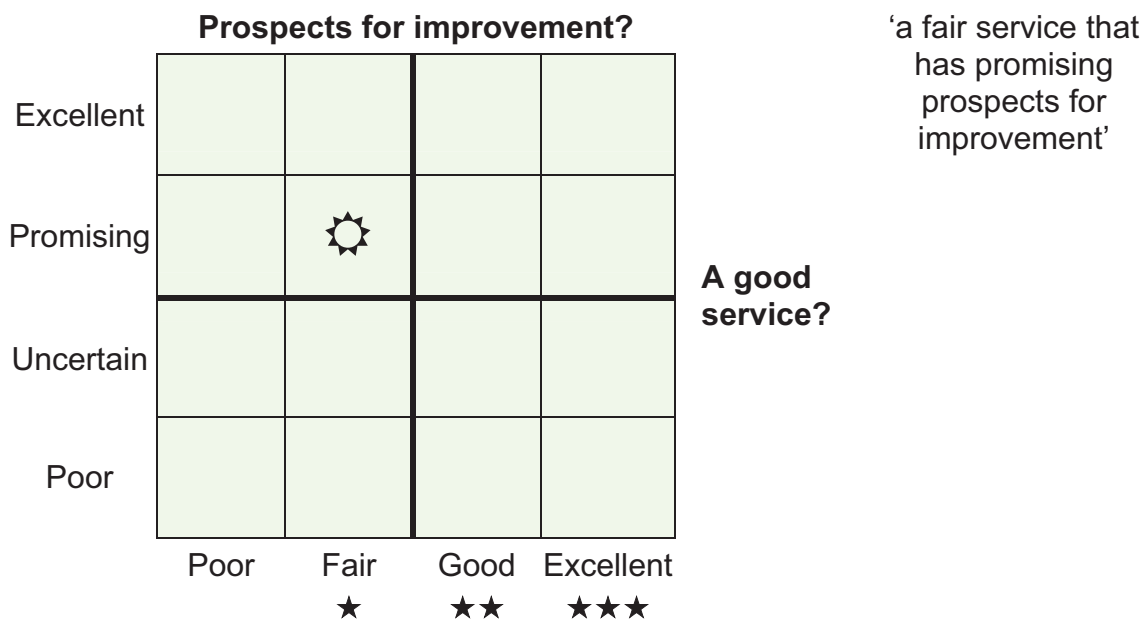
Summary

- 1 The Benefits Service (the Service) at Bracknell Forest Council is fair with promising prospects for improvement.
- 2 The Service responds well to local need by helping people access money they are entitled to, by using Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) to help the most vulnerable; and seeking service users' views to make improvements. Policies and plans are shaped by local people's views but more use could be made of the views of internal and external partners.
- 3 Access to the Service is fair. There are no delays at Council offices, and response times for the phone have improved. Leaflets and forms are in offices but they don't all state if they are available in other languages or formats such as Braille. Information is now easier to find on the Council's website. Decision letters are poor – they are hard to read and understand – but the quality of customer care overall has improved over the last six months.
- 4 Decisions on new claims or changes to claims take too long, though they are improving and there is now a fast-track service for some claims. Preventing fraud and error is a high priority and a high level of sanctions is applied.
- 5 The Service takes appropriate steps to ensure that the money it pays out is based on accurate assessments. But too many reconsiderations and appeals are being revised which means that some users are not always getting the right decision on their claim, first time. The Service is also taking too long to submit appeals to the Tribunal Service.
- 6 Overpayments are not managed well and the level of debt is rising. Action is being taken but the Service does not know clearly how much of the total debt outstanding is fully recoverable.
- 7 The recent record on improvement is good including faster processing times, a fast-track system and take-up events for the most disadvantaged. But some of this is relatively recent with no sustained track record.
- 8 The Service is low cost and value for money is improving through benchmarking, and closely monitoring and reducing costs. Capacity is increasing through a new IT and telephone system and home working.
- 9 The prospects for improvement are promising because senior officers manage planning and performance effectively whilst communication and learning are good. There is a clear vision supported by objectives, though targets are not always SMART. Longer-term plans for the Service are not well documented, but strong officer and political leadership is effective. Complaints are dealt with appropriately, but the Service cannot show it is effectively learning from such feedback or from appeals.
- 10 Capacity is good. Outsourcing and home working give the Service flexibility, additional capacity and better productivity. Staff are well managed, team working is strong, and sickness rates are low. Procurement of the new IT system is well managed. Training is good and includes sharing with neighbouring authorities.

Scoring the Service

11 We have assessed Bracknell Forest Council as providing a 'fair', one-star service that has 'promising' prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Figure 1 Scoring chartⁱ



Source: Audit Commission

12 The Service is a fair, one star service because:

- benefit take-up work is giving local people access to money they are entitled to;
- customers do not experience delays when visiting or contacting the Service;
- there is a wide range of leaflets and forms available to customers in the offices and on the website;
- high levels of sanctions, regular campaigns to remind customers to report changes and targeted staff training are helping to reduce fraud and error; and
- the views of service users are used to make changes and improvements that people want.

ⁱ The scoring chart displays performance in two dimensions. The horizontal axis shows how good the service or function is now, on a scale ranging from no stars for a service that is poor (at the left-hand end) to three stars for an excellent service (right-hand end). The vertical axis shows the improvement prospects of the service, also on a four-point scale.

13 However it has some weaknesses. These include:

- benefit claims are not being dealt with as quickly as they could be;
- some people may not be getting the right decision on their claim first time as a high number of reconsiderations and appeals are being revised;
- letters are not easy to understand;
- not all leaflets contain details about how people with specific needs could have them in different formats; and
- management information about the level of overpayment debt is not effective.

14 The Service has promising prospects for improvement because:

- it has a good, recent track record in delivering sustainable improvements which are noticeable by users, partners and staff, such as better processing and waiting times;
- it provides improving value for money with relatively low and reducing costs;
- officer and political leadership of the service is strong, accompanied by empowered, well-trained staff with high satisfaction, good team-working and morale;
- it actively seeks best practice from others to implement in-house; and
- it has good capacity to improve, with investments in a new IT system, effective use of off-site staff and the roll-out of home working.

15 However there are some barriers to improvement. These are:

- some improvements have only been in place for about six months and do not have a sustained track record;
- the direction of travel of some performance indicators is mixed, with missed targets; and
- business plans do not clearly articulate longer term plans for the service, and not all actions have clear targets.

Recommendations

16 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, Councils need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. Our recommendations identify the expected benefits for both local people and the Council. In addition, we identify the approximate costsⁱ and indicate the priority we place on each recommendation and key dates for delivering these where they are considered appropriate. In this context, the inspection team recommends that the Council should do the following.

Recommendation

R1 Provide a better service to customers by:

- ensuring that customers are aware that all leaflets and information about the Service are available in different formats and community languages;
- contacting customers that have complained for their suggestions on how the Service could be improved; and
- understanding the reasons for high numbers of revisions and using this to make changes within the Service.

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- reducing the need for customers to make additional calls to resolve council tax queries;
- making the Service more accessible to people with specific needs;
- the views of customers are used to shape and design the delivery of the Service; and
- improving decision making to ensure benefit is paid correctly, first time.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. The implementation plan should be agreed by November 2010.

ⁱ Low cost is defined as less than 1 per cent of the annual service cost, medium cost is between 1 and 5 per cent and high cost is over 5 per cent.

Recommendation

- R2** Improve value for money by:
- understanding the profile of outstanding debt to target recovery action; and
 - ensure that recovery action is taken against all overpayments identified as recoverable.

The expected benefit of this recommendation is:

- reduced level of overpayment debt owed to the Council.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with medium costs. This should be implemented by March 2011.

Recommendation

- R3** Continue with plans to improve by:
- consulting consistently with stakeholders and internal and external partners on plans for future changes and improvements;
 - ensuring there are SMART objectives for all actions in the Benefits business plan; and
 - ensuring that potential risks that may arise from the new system implementation are well-mitigated.

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- improved focus on the needs of service users;
- improved performance management;
- assurance that objectives will be delivered; and
- delivering the new system within time and on budget.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by November 2010.

Report

Context

The locality

- 17 Bracknell Forest Council is a Unitary Authority located in Berkshire, around 30 miles from London. It has a population of 114,000.
- 18 The population is predominantly white British, which accounts for nearly 91 per cent of the population. Nine per cent of the population classify themselves as being from a Black and Minority Ethnic Group. Bracknell has low levels of deprivation and is ranked 320 out of 354 in the Index of Multiple Deprivation, where one is the most deprived. Eighty six percent of residents are satisfied with the area in which they live, which is above average.
- 19 The working age population is above average at 65 per cent. People of retirement age make up only 14 per cent of the population. Wages are above average at £567.30 per week. The majority of jobs are within the services industry such as finance, IT and other business activities.
- 20 Bracknell Forest has 8.9 per cent of working aged residents claiming benefits, which is below average. In March 2010, 1,970 people claimed Job Seekers Allowance, which is 2.7 per cent of the working aged population, lower than average. This is an increase of 13 per cent over the last 12 months - much higher than the average increases in the South East and England. Of the working age population, 3.4 per cent claim Employment Support Allowance and 1.2 per cent claim lone parent benefits, both of which are below average.
- 21 The average house price is £202,887, above the national average of £164,455. In terms of housing tenure, 73 per cent of households in Bracknell own their own home, 10 per cent rent from a private landlord, and 17 per cent rent from a housing association.

The Council

- 22 Bracknell Forest has 42 Councillors representing 18 wards. The Council is controlled by the Conservatives, with a political make-up of 39 Conservatives and 3 Labour.
- 23 The 2009 Organisational Assessment found that overall, the Council performs well. The Council scored 3 out of 4 for managing performance and 2 out of 4 for use of resources.
- 24 The Council's vision is 'to make Bracknell Forest a place where all people can thrive; living, learning and working in a clean, safe and healthy environment'. It has six priorities which are:
 - A town centre fit for the 21st Century;
 - Protecting and enhancing our environment;

- Promoting health and achievement;
- Creating a borough where people are, and feel, safe;
- Value for money; and
- Sustain economic prosperity.

25 In February 2008, the Council transferred its housing stock to Bracknell Forest Homes. They are a non-profit housing association who own and manage the 5,600 rented and 1,100 leasehold properties transferred.

The Council's Benefits Service

26 Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) are national welfare benefits administered by the Council on behalf of the DWP. A complex legal framework is in place to define who is entitled to benefit and to reduce fraud and error in the system. The Benefits Service within a Council has a responsibility to pay the right benefit to the right person at the right time.

27 Our responsibility to provide assurance (to government, Councils, taxpayers and benefit customers) means that we will consider inspection where there is a current or future risk to the service and its customers. In the case of the Bracknell Forest Council, the reasons for commissioning the inspection were:

- the average speed of processing was below average, when compared to others;
- signs of deterioration in performance in 2009;
- to ensure the service had prepared for the new IT system due in October 2010;
- a previous data quality audit in 2008 resulted in some reported performance information being reserved; and
- concerns that the Council was not fully exploiting the degree to which an effective Benefits service would support corporate objectives around social inclusion.

28 The key objectives of this inspection were:

- to assess the effectiveness of Bracknell's Benefits Service in meeting the needs of the vulnerable people it serves, and contributing to the Council's wider corporate objectives; and
- to provide assurance to the DWP and other stakeholders regarding the quality of service provision.

29 The Service is run in-house as part of the housing service within the Environment, Culture and Communities. It has 22.5 full time equivalent staff, with some benefits assessment and overpayments collection contracted out to a third party. In 2008/09, the Council's total administration spend was £1,444,000. The proportion of subsidy grant from DWP was £626,000 (44.6 per cent), with the remaining £778,000 met by tax payers (55.4 per cent). The subsidy grant claim for 2009/10 was £32,000,000.

30 In 2009/10, the Bracknell Forest Benefits Service made £28,000 rent allowances and rent rebates and £21,799,000 mandatory rent allowance payments. Its caseload at March 2010 was 6,812, an increase of 13 per cent from the previous year.

How good is the Benefits Service?

What has the Service aimed to achieve?

- 31 The Service supports wider local area agreement priorities through its benefits work in helping vulnerable people achieve independent living and reducing the number of households in fuel poverty. This links to the Council's corporate priorities in:
- seeking to ensure that every resident feels included and able to access the service they need - by increasing access to service by electronic means;
 - limiting the impact of the recession - by promoting the take-up of benefits allowances and concessions; and
 - promoting independence and choice for vulnerable adults and older people.
- 32 To support the Council's corporate objectives and priorities, the Benefits Service vision is to 'ensure we pay the right benefit to the right person at the right time'. It aims to do this by:
- extending the benefits service;
 - providing the right service; and
 - providing the best service.
- 33 The benefits business plan sets out the actions required to meet these objectives in 2010/11.

Is the Service meeting the needs of the local community and users?

Access, customer care, user and community focus

- 34 The Service uses the views of customers to make changes that people want. A focus group made up of customers discusses changes and potential improvements they would like to see. Using feedback from this group the Service has redesigned the benefit claim form and made changes to the new benefit service standards such as introducing timescales for responding to emails. Responding to the specific needs of service users means that customers are more likely to get the Service they want and need.

- 35 The quality of customer care shown by frontline staff is fair. Customers and stakeholders told us that they have seen improvements over the last six months in the quality of care shown by staff. Our own reality checking found that staff dealing with benefit visitors and telephone callers were polite, knowledgeable and helpful. But both customers and stakeholders expressed concerns that some people still experienced mixed customer care when contacting the Service. Inconsistent customer care can deter customers from contacting the Service, which means they could miss out on information and advice to help them with their claim.
- 36 The Service uses good information about the community to target benefit take-up work effectively. Community profiling information is used to identify which groups in the community are potentially under claiming. Between February 2009 and March 2010, this information was used to target low-income families that resulted in extra annual awards of housing and council tax benefit totalling £18,396. The Service has also helped older people access benefits by referrals to the Pension Service resulting in £25,462 additional benefit during 2009/10. Using detailed community profiling information helps the Service to target take-up to people most in need.
- 37 The Service promotes and encourages benefit take-up and money advice at community events. Activities undertaken include; joint awareness and advice open days with partners such as Age Concern, the Pension Service and the Council's Supporting People team, surgeries held with registered housing providers Bracknell Forest Homes (BFH) and Southern Housing, and, a specific roadshow called 'benefits for you' held in the local shopping centre. Take-up work is evaluated for effectiveness and value for money. For example, outreach work was ended within Sandhurst Town Council building following consultation with the customer focus group. The decision was taken to stop this work and redirect resources elsewhere, because very few local people were using this service. During 2009/10, take-up resulted in extra annual awards of housing and council tax benefit of £63,130. An extra £5,245 was also awarded in backdated housing and council tax benefit during this time. Effective targeted take-up campaigns help local people most in need, access services and financial help they are entitled to, which boosts the wider local economy.ⁱ
- 38 Access to the Service is fair. The main strengths identified are as follows.
- Benefits visitors do not experience long waiting times when visiting the Council offices. From October 2009 to March 2010, the average time that benefit visitors had to wait was less than two and a half minutes. Our own reality checking found that customers were not experiencing any delays when waiting to see someone.
 - The main office for benefit visitors at Time Square is well located and within easy reach of the main shopping centre, bus station and local health centre. Office hours are well advertised and open during normal working hours. Disabled parking spaces are available outside the offices and access to the building is good for people that need extra help such as ramps and automatic doors. In the main reception area there is access available to the Council's website. Benefit visitors can also hand in information and get advice from the other Council office at Easthampstead House also located in the town centre.

ⁱ 'The Money Trail' published (in 2002) by the New Economics Foundation estimates that for every £1 increase in benefits paid through take up work, 77 pence is spent in the local economy.

How good is the Benefits Service?

- Customers are routinely offered interviews with a dedicated member of staff in a private interview room and when possible, staff will also see customers who want to speak in private but have not booked an appointment.
 - Fast tracking of new claims is offered to customers. If customers supply all the information needed in support of their new claim, the Service guarantees to process their claim within 48 hours.
 - Frontline staff have access to staff within the Council to help with translation services. Over 30 members of staff are able to speak and/or read a wide variety of community languages. Some staff are also trained to interpret through sign language.
 - The benefit claim form is clear and easy to use and has recently been crystal marked. Guidance notes are available to help customers complete the form, and the form is available in other formats such as large print, easy read, audiotape, and other languages. Customers needing help are also advised to contact the Council. A checklist helps customers provide the information and evidence they need in support of their claim.
 - Staff are encouraged to refer customers with financial problems to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) for money and debt advice, following staff training in debt awareness.
 - There is a good range of information available in leaflets and posters. Leaflets are widely available in the main reception as well as on the benefit pages of the Council's website.
- 39 The Service has recognised that access through some routes was weak and has addressed this. During the period April 2009 to September 2009, one in four callers that contacted the Service by phone could not get through to speak with someone. Following implementation of the new telephone system improvements in call answering have led to only 1 in 20 callers, from October 2009 to March 2010, hanging up before their call was answered. Our own reality checking found that calls were answered quickly. Getting quick and easy access to the Service by telephone means that people are able to get the information and advice they need about benefits, reducing the need for further unnecessary phone calls and visits to the offices.
- 40 Information about benefits is now easier to find on the Council's website. Results of mystery shopping carried out by the Service in 2009, found customers could not always find the information they needed on the website to answer their query. The website was reviewed and changed to make it easier for customers to navigate to benefits information. Our own reality checking found the website easy to use and information is accessible through text and audio. A wide range of leaflets and downloadable forms are available as well as a benefits calculator to help people work out potential entitlement to housing and council tax benefit. Improving web access helps people choosing this route, get to the right information and advice they need.

- 41 Some weaknesses exist that may make it difficult for customers with specific needs to get information they need. For example some leaflets do not include any information about whether they are available in different languages or in different formats for example in Braille or in large print. Some don't have contact details for hearing impaired people for example, minicom. This means that some customers may find it difficult to understand and provide the information needed to get the money they are entitled to.
- 42 Some service users and external stakeholders told us that system-produced decision letters are hard to read and difficult to understand. The Service has tried to make these letters easier to understand by sending an explanation leaflet with every letter to explain what various parts of the letter mean. The Service is implementing a new benefits operating system in the autumn of 2010 and hopes to address issues around quality of letters. But the poor quality of letters means that currently some people do not fully understand the outcome or status of their claim leading to unnecessary contact with the Service and other agencies, for help.
- 43 Customers are helped to provide information quickly to speed up the time taken to deal with their claim. Customers are contacted by phone within ten days of a claim being received, to discuss what further evidence is needed in support of their claim. If no response or information has been received within ten days, a further call is made to the customer. If information is still not received after 28 days from receipt of the claim, customers are contacted again before the claim is finally made defective. Managers monitor claims to make sure that contact is being made with customers to help them provide the information needed. Proactively helping customers to supply information in support of their claim helps to speed up the time taken by the Service to make a decision or payment to its customers.
- 44 The Service also works with partners to speed up the time taken to deal with claims. Partners such as registered housing providers, Look Aheadⁱ, the Pension Service and private sector landlords have received benefits awareness training and information about how they can help their clients make a claim for benefit. In addition staff from BFH and the Pension Service are trained to verify documents and able to collect evidence and submit claims. This means that partners can provide more support and advice to their clients on supplying the right information and evidence to have their claim dealt with quickly. This offers tenants more choice about how they claim benefit as well as access to advice and information about the benefits scheme or their claim.
- 45 Service users know how long they can expect to wait, to be dealt with. New benefit service standards have been developed and were published in April 2010. Customers were consulted in the design of the standards. The standards set out clear targets for how customers will be dealt with depending on how they access the Service as well as how long they can expect to wait. These are well publicised in the Council offices as well as on the Council's website. A leaflet setting out these standards is also sent with every decision letter sent by the Service to ensure that customers know what the standards are. Clear and comprehensive standards ensure that customers know what level of service they can expect to receive.

ⁱ Look Ahead is an organisation that supports young, vulnerable adults

How good is the Benefits Service?

- 46 The Service communicates and consults with its customers and the wider community. As well as regular liaison with the customer focus group, users are invited to take part in mystery shopping to give feedback to the Service. Draft service plans and policies are regularly published on the Council's website for consultation and people are encouraged to submit their comments. Some recent examples of these include the draft Benefits Service Business Plan for 2010/11, the draft discretionary housing payment (DHP) policy and the draft overpayments policy. Consulting and engaging with service users and non users helps the Service to use learning and feedback to make changes and improvements that users want and need.
- 47 The Service has good relationships with internal and external stakeholders, but their views are not always sought when improvements are being made to service delivery. Regular liaison takes place with a wide range of external partners such as registered providers, private sector landlords, DWP, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and the Pension Service. There is also regular liaison with colleagues from other parts of the organisation including Council Tax, Housing and Adult Social Services. The Service provides training, updates and information about the benefits scheme to help partners assist their clients with making a claim. But partner's views were not sought on the design of the benefit service standards which means that opportunities were missed to use the knowledge that partners have about their customers to design and deliver services based on an understanding of users need.

Diversity

- 48 Some staff within the Service lack awareness of equalities and diversity. Some new starters within the last six months state that they have not received equalities and diversity training at their induction. However, the corporate induction, which all staff have attended, does include equality awareness training, and so the impact of this training is uncertain. Overall, this means that some staff are not fully aware of how they can ensure through their role, that customers receive fair and equal access to the Service.
- 49 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are used by the Council to help support vulnerable people in the community. During 2009/10, in line with the corporate priority to limit the impact of the recession on the local community, the Council has committed to providing additional funds on top of the annual grant to support local people and alleviate hardship. The Service paid out discretionary payments of £12,577 compared to the annual grant of £8,413. Providing additional funds on top of the annual grant ensures that more people can access these funds to relieve financial hardship.

Service outcomes for users and the community

- 50** The Service has not met targets it set itself to reduce the time taken to deal with benefit claims. The Benefit Service Business plan for 2009/10 set a target to reduce the average processing time for new claims and change events (National Indicator 181) to less than 11 days by the end of March 2010. During 2009/10, the Service took on average 14.7 days. The DWP have recently published national performance statistics in respect of National Indicator 181ⁱ. The published data for the first two quarters of 2009/10 shows, this is below the average performance of 12 days when compared to other English Councils. Although the Service was not able to achieve its target by the end of March 2010, there have been recent improvements in the time taken to process new claims and change events. Over the last six months the Service is taking, on average, under 11 days to process these.
- 51** Benefit customers are waiting longer than necessary for their new claims and changes in circumstances to be dealt with. During 2009/10, the Service had a target to process new claims for benefit, on average, in under 22 days by March 2010. The Service took on average, 24.5 days. Compared with the published data from the DWP, this performance would place the Council below average performance of 22 days. During the same period it took on average 10.4 days to deal with a change of circumstance against a target of seven days. When compared with other English Councils this is also below average performance of nine days. Customers who make a new claim or who report a change are waiting too long for a payment or decision which could create unnecessary anxiety and hardship as well as act as a deterrent to people reporting a change in the future.
- 52** Satisfactory arrangements are in place to check the accuracy of benefit payments and claims. The Service carries out a minimum 8 per cent check of all claims dealt with by staff. For newer members of staff there are different arrangements and 100 per cent of their work is checked. During 2009/10, the Service achieved a financial accuracy rate of 92 per cent of claims checked. The Service also measures how many non-financial errors were made. When this is taken into account the Service achieved an overall accuracy rate of 91 per cent for 2009/10. The results of accuracy checking are fed back through to staff on a one-to-one basis which helps managers and staff identify the appropriate learning and development needs. Monitoring cases for error gives the Service a level of assurance that the money it pays out to customers is correct and any potential errors or mistakes are being mitigated.
- 53** A high number of claims are being revised which may mean that people are not always getting the right amount of money they are entitled to. During 2009/10 of the 71 appeals received by the Service, 74 per cent were revised and a new decision was made. In the same period, the Service received 145 reconsiderations and revised 48.3 per cent of these. Managers do not fully understand why higher numbers of appeals and reconsiderations have been revised when the claim has been looked at again and has not analysed what the reasons may be for this. This means the Service is missing opportunities to use this information to help staff make the right decision, first time, on claims they deal with.

ⁱ The Right Time Indicator (NI181) measures the average processing times for new claims and change events.

How good is the Benefits Service?

- 54 Despite the high numbers of revisions, reconsiderations are dealt with promptly. During 2009/10, the Service dealt with 77 per cent of reconsiderations received, within 28 days, against a target of 65 per cent. Dealing with reconsiderations promptly means that the Service is reducing undue worry and anxiety as people wait for a decision to be made.
- 55 Customers that appeal the Council's decision on whether they will receive the benefits they claimed for experience delays. During 2009/10, only 25 per cent of appeals submitted to the Tribunals Service were submitted within four weeks against a target of 65 per cent. All of the appeals received by the Service were submitted to the Tribunal Service within three months. Delays in dealing with appeals, unduly increases the time that people have to wait to hear the outcome of an appeal.
- 56 The Service is effective in identifying unreported changes of circumstance that affect the amount of benefit people receive. Customers receive information about how to report a change when they receive their decision letters from the Service and publicity campaigns take place annually. The last campaign in December 2009, 'time to tell', resulted in 700 calls to the Service over two days from customers. Outcomes from campaigns are reported in the local borough newspaper to ensure that the community is aware of the impact of fraud and error. Risk based reviews and interventions activity take place on a regular basis. Targeted visits are carried out by the Service based on known risks, and there is an annual target to complete 550 visits annually, which is regularly achieved. During 2009/10, 22 per cent of these visits were referred to the Fraud Team of which 40 per cent received a sanction. Changes of circumstances which could result in benefit reducing are suspended by the Service and these claims prioritised, to prevent high levels of overpayments. Proactive work to identify unreported changes of circumstances helps the Service minimise overpayments and ensures that the right benefit is being paid.
- 57 There are effective measures in place to tackle fraud and error. These include:
- appropriate management arrangements in place to risk assess referrals. Risks ratings are reviewed annually based on outcomes achieved over the year and workloads are regularly monitored;
 - a flexible prosecutions policy which allows staff to take account of each individual case and any mitigating factors, to determine the appropriate sanction to apply;
 - management monitoring of the quality of fraud referrals received from all sources. Feedback is given where possible for example to benefits staff to help improve the accuracy and quality of future referrals;
 - regular fraud awareness training delivered to staff within the organisation. Staff within the Benefits Service, Customer Services, Council Tax team and partners such as Bracknell Forest Homes and the Pensions Service, have all received fraud awareness training in the last 12 months;
 - good level of publicity in the local press about successful prosecutions;
 - dedicated 'Cheat Chasers' telephone hotline which is clearly advertised on letters and information sent out from the Service;
 - appropriate use of National Fraud Incentive (NFI) data to investigate potential cases where there may be fraud/and or error;

- proactively dealing with Housing Benefits Matching Service (HBMS) data appropriately, which is sifted by the Fraud Team and cases where the team can undertake investigations are identified and dealt with; and
 - joint working with the DWP to investigate potentially fraudulent cases for benefit. In 2009/10 the Service identified 15 cases to work on a joint investigation with the DWP.
- 58** Outcomes from counter fraud work are good. In 2009/10, the Service achieved 64 sanctions against a target of 45. This equates to 9.82 sanctions per 1000 caseload which is above average when compared to the last set of published performance data in 2007/08 when the average nationally was 5.6 cases per 1000 caseload. Through counter fraud activity, the Service has identified £195,109.51 in overpayments attributable to fraud. Ensuring that fraud and error is minimised through effective management arrangements, good quality referrals, and high profile publicity means the Service is taking good steps to detect and prevent fraud which reduces the burden on the public purse.
- 59** The Benefits Service is contributing to the achievement of wider Council priorities to improve outcomes for local people. The Council has targets to reduce the number of households in fuel poverty, through take-up work, benefits staff promote energy efficiency and the availability of home energy grants when visiting benefit customers. In addition, staff from the Service attend Council-led energy efficiency events to promote the take-up of benefits and grants to reduce fuel poverty. In June 2010, referrals from the Service resulted in a spend of £40,000 for warm front grants. This shows the Service is making a positive contribution to reducing fuel poverty within the community.
- 60** Customer satisfaction with the Service is improving. Results from the 2009 customer survey found that 76.9 per cent of customers who responded rated the Service as good. This is an improvement from the last time this was reported in 2006/07, when satisfaction was rated as good by 71.2 per cent of customers. But the recent results did not meet the target that the Service set itself of 80 per cent. Service users and stakeholders told us although they recognised improvements have been made by the Service these have only been seen over the last six months. The Council's own mystery shopping in 2009 identified low satisfaction rates of 40 per cent with the telephone service. But steps have been taken to improve this with the implementation of a new telephone system. Actively seeking out the views of service users gives the Service a good overview of what customers think about the quality of service they receive.
- 61** Customers are happy with the facilities available to them when they visit the Council offices. From the 2009 customer survey, 97.3 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the reception area and agreed that it was clean and tidy. Clean and comfortable surroundings help visitors feel more welcomed and valued.

How good is the Benefits Service?

Is the Service delivering value for money?

- 62 The Service has a clear understanding of its costs and how these compare with others. The Council's Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel set up a working group in 2009 to review the Housing Benefit Improvement Plan. As part of that review the Service was benchmarked against 18 other Councils and found the Service to be below average cost when compared to others. The Audit Commission's value for money profile that looks at costs from 2008/09 also shows the Service is below average cost when compared to other Councils with similar demographics and caseload.
- 63 Areas of higher spend are balanced with the need to meet service priorities. The Service has procured an off site processing contract for three years. The annual cost of this arrangement to the Service is more than it would pay for two full time equivalent posts locally. But current productivity from the contract is high with an accuracy rate of 99 per cent. This arrangement helps the Service build the additional capacity and resilience it needs to improve processing times despite an increasing benefits caseload (13 per cent in 2009/10). Careful consideration of costs helps the Service to ensure that areas where there is higher spend, delivers the desired improvements in performance and accuracy of benefit payments.
- 64 Areas of high cost have been identified and savings have been made. Benchmarking data has helped the Service to target higher cost areas. This has led to the use of offsite processing staff and introducing a home working pilot. This pilot cost £1,500 to set up, but it has improved productivity and is being extended. Other areas where savings have been achieved include joint training being delivered for staff from other Berkshire councils. In addition, despite a reduction of £53,000 in 2009/10 in the annual administration subsidy from Central Government this has been absorbed by restructuring the Service to remove the need for pre-assessment staff. These strategic decisions and actions demonstrate a clear focus on reducing costs and achieving better value for money.
- 65 Although Service costs are low, local residents make a higher than average contribution to the costs of running the Service, through the Council Tax. The Audit Commission's value for money profile shows that Bracknell's tax payers contributed over 55 per cent to the costs of running the Service in 2008/09 compared with the national average of 45 per cent.

- 66** Management of housing benefit overpayment debt is not effective and overpayment debt is rising. The Service does not have a clear understanding how much of its overpayment debt is recoverable. The outstanding debt is split and held on two different systems. Over £380,000 of pre-2005 debt is held on one system. The Service believes that 90 per cent of this debt may no longer be recoverable but plans to write these debts off, are not clear. The remaining debt sits on the current operating system. At the start of April 2009, £1.2 million was outstanding on the current operating system but the Service is unable to identify and report how much of this is being recovered through ongoing benefit entitlement or other methods of recovery. During the year resources were diverted away from collecting debt to review all the benefit debt outstanding, to determine how much is recoverable. This resulted in £137,598 of debt written off as it can no longer be recovered. This review is ongoing and due to be completed by October 2010. The total amount of overpayment debt is increasing. Debts stood at £1,585,983 (April 2009) an increase of 9.1 per cent on the previous year. During 2009/10, £838,205 of overpayments were identified but only £540,489 (64 per cent) was recovered. This is significantly below the Council's own target of 75 per cent. Prompt action to recover overpayments helps to reduce the costs of running services to local taxpayers.
- 67** Arrangements to recover benefit overpayments which have been identified as recoverable, are satisfactory. When overpayments are identified, customers are contacted to make arrangements to repay. The Service considers the ability of people to pay and offers opportunities for customers to repay in instalments. All available methods of recovery are considered such as recovery from ongoing benefit and blameless tenant recoveryⁱ. Where the Service is unable to put in place arrangements to recover an overpayment, this is passed to a collection agency. The agency uses various methods to recover including telephone contact, letters, text messages and home visits. Outsourcing elements of overpayment recovery offers the Service improved opportunities to reduce the level of debt it is owed.
- 68** Satisfactory arrangements are in place to manage and monitor benefit subsidy. The subsidy claim is monitored weekly. Variances are discussed with team leaders to highlight any issues or potential training needs for staff. Managers work with finance colleagues to manage the claim which includes building in forecasts over the year for any potential changes that may have an impact. Local authority error overpayments during 2009/10 did not exceed the lower threshold limit which means the Service will be able to claim 100 per cent subsidy against these overpayments. The 2008/09 claim was initially qualified by auditors but following additional information from the Service, the DWP have confirmed there will be no direct loss in payments. Effective management of the subsidy claim ensures that the Service is minimising potential loss in income.

ⁱ 'Blameless Tenant' is the process of recovering an HB overpayment made to a landlord or agent from HB paid directly to that landlord or agents in respect of a tenant whose benefit was not overpaid. The tenant whose HB is being deducted will be deemed to have paid their rent to the value of that recovery.

What are the prospects for improvement to the Service?

What is the service track record in delivering improvement?

69 The Service has a good, recent track record in delivering improvements. The Service has made significant improvements that have been experienced by users such as faster processing times, improved fraud detection and prevention, an improved telephone system and take-up events focussing on the most disadvantaged. A restructure, better value for money, use of better performance management information and off-site staff have also helped to improve the service in a sustainable way, despite an increase in caseload due to the recession. However, many of these improvements have only been in place for the last six months and so performance indicators have yet to show a sustained direction of travel.

Table 1 Local Performance Indicators

Track record of performance

Local performance indicator	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
National Indicator 181 (average days)		15.6	14.7
Average time taken to process new claims (days)	28.4	31.3	24.5
Average time taken to process a change in circumstance (days)	9	10.2	10.4

Source: Audit Commission/Bracknell Forest Council

70 The direction of travel of some key performance indicators is mixed, although there have been recent improvements in most areas. Performance over three years shows improvements in areas such as time to process claims and changes, avoidable contact rates, satisfaction rates and sanctions. The Service had poorer performance in many areas in 2008/09 and targets were missed in 2009/10. As at September 2009, it was performing below average for NI181 compared nationally. But satisfaction rates have increased from 71.2 per cent to 76.9 per cent and avoidable contact has reduced from 14 per cent to 11 per cent, meaning improved outcomes for customers. Also, although the 2009/10 result for NI181 was 14.7 days overall, performance improved steadily in the second half of the year, and has been within the 11 days target for the last three months. Fraud work remains good and new fast track times are also performing well with claims being processed within 48 hours. Recovery of overpayments has recently dropped due to a decision to focus on write-offs instead.

What are the prospects for improvement to the Service?

- 71** The Service can show significant improvements experienced by users. Improvements include the fast track service, promotion of the take-up strategy and a new telephone handling system that has improved call waiting times. A successful 'Benefits For You' event was held in August 2009 which gave advice to residents. This promotion is helping support the Council's corporate priority to 'limit the impact of the recession'. Due to its success another one is being held this year. Many stakeholders have noticed the improvements in the service. They recognise the better communication and improved processing times. Users, for example, have commented on the improved, faster telephone service, quicker waiting times in reception and a better appointments system which saves queuing time. Although issues such as confusing letters, remain. By the end of June 2010, feedback from users will have led to reception improvements including lower desks for easier access, more computers, improved privacy areas and a scanner to copy residents' documents more quickly. The Service has used the good information it has about its local community to target more vulnerable residents as part of its take-up strategy. A restructure led to a new service development officer which enabled the take-up strategy to be implemented. The restructure also enabled new dedicated teams to process new claims and changes faster, despite an increased caseload. The Service recognises the need to improve entitlement letters further, and the new IT system in October will address this. These improvements are helping the Council meet its objectives.
- 72** The Service delivers improving value for money. It can demonstrate that it is identifying efficiencies by reducing its costs over time and that costs are relatively low. The impact of restructures, improved performance and increased case load showed the gross cost of processing a claim fell from £79.20 in 2008 to £67.20 in 2009, which is below the average of the Council's 18 other benchmarked authorities. The new flexible offsite processing contract has enabled additional support at competitive rates with an option to increase resources if necessary. Although the Council is paying 19 per cent more than it would for two posts, the offsite contractors have 99 per cent accuracy and 28 per cent better productivity.
- 73** The Service has identified areas of high cost and made savings as a result. It has targeted higher cost areas through its benchmarking and survey work. This has led to the use of offsite staff, joint training and a home working pilot. This pilot cost £1,500 of capital money to set up, but it has improved productivity and is being extended shortly. The Service is focussing on older debt work for recovery and write off. A £56,000 cut in the administrative grant was achieved by restructuring the Service to delete the pre-assessor posts. These strategic decisions and actions demonstrate a clear focus on value for money.
- 74** The Service has plans to save more money in future years. Future saving plans that have been secured include the investment in a new IT system, extending the agency staff contract and the purchase of the Mosaic database. For example, the cost of the Mosaic database has already been shared with other Council services such as the Leisure service and there are plans to extend this to other departments. This will reduce the burden on the service budget but help maintain service delivery.

What are the prospects for improvement to the Service?

How well does the service manage performance?

- 75 The aims of the Service are clear and challenging, with business plans supporting these aims for the forthcoming year. The Service has a clear vision for what it wants to achieve, and its objectives are addressing the right things to realise this. The 2010/11 business plan contains clear, challenging targets, such as achieving 960 fast track applications (compared with 400 last year) and 99 per cent accuracy rates. It also has a clear drive to engage further with harder to reach groups, increase take-up and improve fraud and error detection. These support corporate objectives. The 2009/10 business plan contained some challenging targets such as to achieve NI181 within 11 days by March 2010 and a five per cent increase in satisfaction which were both achieved. The benefits improvement plan, produced after the 2009/10 business plan as a result of a working group investigation of the Service, was also accomplished with actions delivered including expanding offsite processing, explaining technicalities better to customers, and pursuing best practice by visiting high performing Councils. Ongoing actions have been amalgamated into the new 2010/11 business plan. However, the plan is at a high level and not all actions have SMART targets, such as meeting efficiency targets or promoting community cohesion. Despite a robust annual business plan process, clear, documented longer term plans for the Service are not in place. Although there is a vision to be an excellent service, this has not yet been articulated other than in a report to explore shared services after the new IT system has been implemented. This means that stakeholders do not have a shared understanding of the longer term plans for the service.
- 76 Service plans link well to Local Area Agreements and corporate objectives. The benefits business plan for 2010/11 follows the corporate business planning system and links to three of the Council's three-year corporate objectives. The plan was consulted on with, for example, the benefits user group and staff, as well as being available on line for comment. This ensures plans are co-ordinated and deliverable. Key actions carried out to support corporate objectives include an action to 'maximise availability of benefits' which the Service has done. For example by December 2009, £51,890 additional benefits had been issued by proactive campaigns. A range of procedures are in place, up-to-date and have been consulted on, such as the new take-up strategy and Discretionary Housing Payment scheme. However, although the business plan states that it links to directorate service plan objectives, it is not clear which ones. Overall, the plans show how the Service contributes to the Council's wider aims.
- 77 The Service has effective leadership. Officer and political commitment to the Service is strong, with a highly-regarded head of service. Overview and Scrutiny Committee play an active role by providing independent challenge through a working group and in-house inspection. As a result of this working group, improvements such as explanation leaflets are now provided with letters including links to online information. Staff report of good team working, improved morale, and approachable senior staff. Councillors are very positive about the leadership of benefits senior staff, have a high level of involvement and view the Service as a priority in helping the Council achieve its objectives. The portfolio holder attends monthly meetings with service managers and provides a visible presence to staff. This leadership and commitment provides a culture within which the Service is supported to improve.

What are the prospects for improvement to the Service?

- 78** Performance is managed well. This is demonstrated by recent improvements in performance, annual appraisals and targets for all staff, weekly performance meetings and monthly meetings with housing management and the portfolio holder. A quarterly performance monitoring report including finances is reported to the senior management team, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, all councillors and the executive. Councillors report that the level of information they receive enables them to ask questions and challenge areas where appropriate, such as via the recent working group. Quarterly performance is also posted on the website, sent to landlords, and available in reception. Arrangements are in place to report on performance against the new benefits standards from the end of June 2010. Staff are also managed effectively. Regular one to ones are held and work plans include performance targets and training. This means that staff are well-informed and engaged with the whole performance management process, although customer service staff would also welcome this weekly performance information. New quality monitoring reports are in place for individual assessors, including off-site staff. Issues raised in staff meetings such as the need for a weekly performance update and reception refurbishment have been addressed. Past issues with data quality have been improved by corporate training, a new performance management system and clearer ownership of data. Overall, this effective performance management ensures the Service is able to take appropriate action to ensure continuous improvement.
- 79** The Service understands the profile of its users. The Service's Equality Impact Assessment shows a good recognition of equality and diversity issues and good efforts are made to understand the make-up of benefit recipients. The Service is making use of the new Mosaic database which has led to a targeting of more deprived neighbourhoods and low income families, for example, by holding out of town surgeries. It has used this information to improve the service for harder to reach groups. It has produced leaflets in different languages, promoted the Service in school letters sent to parents, published a survey on community TV, held a Polish event day to offer housing and benefits advice, and promotes home visits for those unable to visit the Council. These actions help ensure that every resident is able to access the service they need.
- 80** Communication and learning within the Service is good overall. The Service actively seeks best practice from others to apply in-house. Staff have visited high-performing councils to gain an understanding of how they operate. As a result, this benchmarking has led to a staff restructure, the deletion of pre-assessment posts, and the roll-out of home working. This in turn has led to cost savings, improved performance, and the ability to deal with peaks and troughs in workload. Complaints are monitored and dealt with appropriately. Most staff view communications with other services as very good. However, the Service cannot demonstrate effective learning from its reconsiderations and appeals. Liaison with the revenue service remains an issue. Problems include the time taken to update council tax accounts, the revenue service's lack of awareness of some benefits service developments such as the restructure, and the Service's location in a separate building, meaning that complicated queries may result in telephone calls to the Council Tax department based in another office.

What are the prospects for improvement to the Service?

Does the service have the capacity to improve?

- 81 The Service has good capacity to improve. It is investing well to deliver further sustainable improvements. The current IT system is due to be replaced in October 2010. The £650,000 capital investment in this new IT system will lead to online applications, improved letters and more efficient working. The Service is also investing in rolling out home working and expects to increase productivity by 10 per cent as well as freeing up office space and improving workforce planning. A new £10,000 telephone system has been in place for six months resulting in more effective call management. The system enables staff to listen into calls where necessary for training purposes and monitor the abandonment rate, waiting times and queue numbers. An £81,000 capital refurbishment of the reception area is due to be completed by the end of June 2010. Offsite staff also offer increased capacity. These are all longer term sustainable solutions, as well as early plans for the new IT system to enable potential shared services in the future.
- 82 Workforce and financial planning is adequate. Staff are well-managed, with low sickness and turnover rates. Morale and job satisfaction are high with improved career structures, the training of pre-assessors to become full assessors and a new development post enabling better outreach work, particularly to harder to reach groups. A workforce plan is in place which links to the corporate workforce plan. It includes actions such as exploring partnership working, a retraining scheme and increased opportunities for professional qualifications. It has led to the implementation of a three-year contract for outsourcing processing and the roll-out of a home working pilot which is being extended. Although some actions are SMART, such as details on outsourcing and home working, other actions such as improving skills gaps are not specific meaning it is unclear how the service intends exactly to increase skills. As part of its workforce planning, the Service has contracted out part of its work to an offsite processing company to process claims. This flexible arrangement offers the Service additional capacity, higher accuracy rates of 99 per cent and 28 per cent better productivity. Financially, the Service is well managed and has no planned budget cuts for this year. Procurement of the IT system has been evaluated effectively, with a detailed evaluation report submitted to the board for approval. This planning helps support future, longer-term sustainable improvement of the Service.

What are the prospects for improvement to the Service?

- 83** Risk management is good. Risks are regularly reported to the overview and scrutiny committee and are on the corporate risk register to raise their profile. Major risks around the implementation of the new IT system have been mitigated well. For example, a £40,000 contingency budget is in place to ensure that data is accurate before input, staff were involved in evaluating the new system including site visits, and agency staff have been employed to cover those on secondment to the project. Training on the new IT system has been well-planned and is being overseen by corporate training staff to ensure the training meets its objectives. A ‘train the trainer’ scheme is also in place to provide local support. Experienced, Prince2 trained project management Council staff and from the IT supplier are on the project board. The project is on schedule and has good buy-in from staff and councillors. The revenues service, in a separate directorate, will also be using the new IT system, but it is unclear if the two services are in agreement as to how the new system should operate. Overall, the project is well-supported and managed and will help deliver efficiencies and improvements.
- 84** Training within the Service is good and meets the needs of staff. It is well-planned and effective, ranging from customer care, IT and the opportunity to study for NVQs. Professional training is provided where necessary and reasonable budgets are available, slightly above benchmark levels. Training for staff to prevent fraud and error has been particularly well planned. The different needs of staff have been taken into account and training is tailored to meet these needs. Fraud training is carried out annually, as well as via e-learning and is available to landlords, off-site staff and staff from other services. For example, staff from HR and Education have attended it. The Service has also efficiently shared training with neighbouring authorities. Training has been provided to allow pre-assessment officers to progress to full assessment officers which has improved their career path. Training is evaluated to ensure that it is effective, with results from training activities fed back and discussed with staff individually. Some staff have suggested more refresher training, for example, on the impact of recent legislative changes. And not all councillors have taken up the training available meaning they may not have up-to-date knowledge of the service. Overall, well-planned and delivered training is helping the Service ensure staff have the right skills and knowledge to undertake their roles effectively.
- 85** Partnership working is adequate. The Service is proactive in developing relations with neighbouring benefits services. For example, it co-ordinated a Berkshire-wide group of benefits services to identify joint working opportunities, such as the recent joint benefits training which reduced costs. It has also recently agreed a shared mystery shopping exercise to improve learning opportunities. A recent event was held in conjunction with other partners such as the NHS and Citizens Advice Bureau in the town centre to raise awareness of issues such as benefits and home insulation grants. This partnership working is making the Service more accessible to residents and helping limit the impact of the recession. However, plans to share services are only in their infancy.

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ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 5 OCTOBER 2010

re³ UPDATE AND RECYCLING FIGURES **[Chief Officer: Environment & Public Protection]**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council is in a partnership along with Wokingham and Reading Councils that provides for the disposal of our waste until 2031. The partnership was developed as part of a Private Finance Initiative and had a value at the time of commencement in excess of £600M over the term of the 25 year contract. This arrangement gives rise to predicted refuse disposal savings to each party in excess of £25M when compared to the 'do nothing' option over the same period.
- 1.2 Save for the rectification of minor building construction matters, we have now moved into the longer and more challenging delivery phase of the project.
- 1.3 The project is managed by the Joint Waste Disposal Board under the chairmanship of Councillor Mrs Dorothy Hayes. The Board is comprised of two Executive Members from each Authority. Reporting to the Board is a Project Director (a nominated senior officer with a part time role) and a full time Project Manager. Senior officers from each Authority meet under the leadership of the Project Director to ensure overall delivery.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the Panel notes this re3 and recycling update report.**

3 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Board meets quarterly. It has its own operational budget and its challenge in the current economic climate is to identify potential savings. Savings can be gained through operational efficiencies and finding cheaper waste disposal alternatives to landfill. The Board have looked at their operational budget needs for 2011/12 and have identified savings of £54k (24% of total net budget). Discussions are also ongoing at an officer level with the contractor WRG with a view to finding savings in their operational costs, alternatives to landfill and other business opportunities such as the potential sale of spare capacity in the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF).
- 3.2 The hope was that in the current year the project would be achieving a recycling rate of 40%. The latest information suggests that this target may not be reached. There are several reasons for this:
 - The delay in the opening of Lakeside Energy from Waste site
 - The decline in waste tonnages being disposed of at the Household Waste Recycling Centres (down from 239 tonnes in 2001/02 to 193 tonnes in 2009/10)
 - The impact of the recession generally
 - Waste diversion and minimisation

- 3.3 A further factor that has not helped in relation to achieving this target is the level of contamination of the recyclable materials being put into the MRF (in Bracknell Forest from the contents of the blue bins) for processing. The plant is working at its optimum speed but it is trying to cope with an average contamination rate of 20%. Through changes to the operation it is intended to draw out more of the contamination over the coming months but there is a responsibility upon the collection authorities to do more to help. A significant cause of the problem is due to residents across the partnership putting their recycling material in small shopping bags. Whilst the plant has provision for bag splitting it struggles with small tightly sealed bags. Problems also occur when paper and cardboard goes in wet. In Bracknell Forest the use of blue wheeled bins helps with the process but we still have to do more to help ensure that residents use their bin for the right materials and ideally don't use bags.
- 3.4 Another challenge for WRG is finding sustainable and economically viable outlets for whatever is collected. It is not acceptable for the Partnership to dispose of materials at any fiscal or environmental cost. Accordingly, the final destination of all material is carefully monitored. What ever the final destination source, it will invariably require a product delivered to a given standard. Accordingly WRG have often to meet tight tolerance limits or risk having the load rejected. This is particularly the case with plastics. We select out the higher value plastics and the tolerance limits are very tight. There is still little market in the UK for many of the forms of plastic in use and therefore there are few places that will take such material.
- 3.5 Notwithstanding the above the project is projecting an end of year recycling rate of 37-38%. The recent introduction of a mixed wood service at Longshot Lane and Smallmead has had a major impact on performance. The wood trials are showing good results in respect of extracting waste for re-use. A trial will also soon commence at Longshot Lane to extract more recycling material from the general waste stream (i.e. over the wall). The results of all such trials will be reported to the Joint Waste Board in due course. It is expected that such initiatives will improve recycling rates by a further 1.87% but this will still be below the 40% target. Other initiatives are being developed and this will continue to be so over the term of the contract.
- 3.6 As of mid-September the latest outturn figure for re³ for the year was £5,888,772 against a budget of £5,832,480. The pressure has been reported through the budget monitoring process. The forecast takes account of the increase in business rates, the rate of inflation applied via the contract being higher than budget and a reduced tonnage in the first quarter.

4 OTHER ISSUES

- 4.1 Waste disposal is directly linked to waste collection. Officers are currently in the process of evaluating the bids for a new refuse contract for the Borough from August 2011. The opportunity has been taken as part of the process to build in stronger links between the two service areas. The new collection contractor will for example have to commit themselves to helping reduce contamination rates as collected from the kerbside.
- 4.2 As WRG have found it challenging to achieve recycling targets so have the Council. All targets were set against a background of an expectation of increasing household disposal rates. This is no longer the case. The table below shows the situation

locally as regards the overall tonnages and our performance:

	2008/09	2009/10
NI191 - residual household waste (kg/hh)	677.46	646.69
NI192 - % household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting	40.44	37.83
NI193 - % of municipal waste sent to landfill	56.34	44.48
Total household waste collected (tonnes)	52459.88	47973.36
Total household waste recycled, reused and composted (tonnes)	21214.07	18146.58

- 4.3 Whilst the overall fall in waste tonnages is making the achievement of our 40.4% recycling target harder, we are doing well against our targets for residential waste per household (2009/10 target 675 max - achieved 646.24 kg). We have also seen a big improvement with the coming on line of Lakeside in respect of the percentage of waste landfilled (achieved 44.5% in 2009/10 with Lakeside versus 56.3% previous year).
- 4.4 It evident that whilst we have done well as a Borough thanks to the support of our residents we have still got a long way to go. We still see avoidable contamination of our recycling collection. Waste is going into the green residual waste bins that could be recycled. Bracknell Forest Council has commissioned Waste Watch to undertake door knocking in two poor performing areas and this work is complete. This will help us to improve our communication to help residents to understand what can and cannot be recycled. In addition leaflets, bin stickers and calendars have all been revamped to include a strong message about the correct materials to recycle. Having regard to all of the initiatives already in place locally there is little excuse for not recycling but it is evident that education and the promotion of clear messages is perhaps the only way to effect continued improvement. Many look to the Council to collect more of their sorted waste but without sustainable outlets doing so would only be possible at very high cost.
- 4.5 Our experience with plastic for example is being fed back to Government as part of the consultation on waste. Like other Councils we are keen to inform them of the barriers to recycling. We also would like to see a shift in responsibility to put more obligations on the retailers when they specify packaging so that there is less wastage.

Background Papers

None

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Document Reference

CO/DMT/ECCO&SPanel/2010/ re³UpdateandRecyclingFigures (a)

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ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 5 OCTOBER 2010

PLANNING POLICY UPDATE FOLLOWING THE REVOCATION OF REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Director of Environment, Culture and Communities

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report advises the Panel of recent changes to planning policies.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **The Panel notes the Government's advice on the immediate issues arising from the revocation of Regional Planning Strategies.**

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Issues Arising from the Revocation of Regional Strategies

- 3.1 On 6 July 2010 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced the revocation of Regional Strategies with immediate effect. Attached to a letter informing Chief Planning Officers in England of this change was advice on the immediate issues arising from this change. This update report is based on that advice and is set out in the form of questions and answers. The implications for Bracknell Forest are in italics.

- 3.2 The final part of the paper covers the Government's announcement that council's should do more to reduce street clutter.

3.3 **Do National Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) remain in force?**

Yes. PPSs provide planning policies on a wide range of topics including Green Belts, Sustainable Economic Growth, Housing and Climate Change. The Policy Statement on Regional Strategies (February 2010) is cancelled, and references to Regional Strategies in other Policy Statements are no longer valid. However, all other PPSs will continue to apply until they are replaced by the National Planning Framework.

3.4 **How will the change affect planning applications?**

In determining planning applications local planning authorities must continue to have regard to the development plan. This will now consist only of:

- Adopted DPDs;
- Saved policies; and
- Any old style plans that have not lapsed.

Local planning authorities should also have regard to other material considerations, including national policy. Local planning authorities can also refer to evidence that was developed in support of the revoked Regional Strategies as a material

consideration if relevant. Where local planning authorities have not yet issued decisions on planning applications that have already been submitted, they can review those decisions in light of the new freedoms following the revocation of Regional Strategies. The revocation of the Regional Strategy may also be a material consideration.

3.5 Should we continue preparing LDF documents?

Yes. The revocation of Regional Strategies is not a signal for local authorities to stop making plans for their area. Local planning authorities should continue to develop LDF core strategies and other DPDs (such as the Site Allocations DPD), reflecting local people's aspirations and decisions on important issues such as climate change, housing and economic development.

These local plans will guide development in their areas and provide certainty for investors and communities. Local authorities may wish to review their plans following the revocation of Regional Strategies and the government recommends that where reviews are undertaken, these should be commenced as quickly as possible.

3.6 How does this affect adopted local plans / LDFs?

Adopted DPDs and saved policies will continue to provide the statutory planning framework. Local authorities may decide to review these now that Regional Strategies have been revoked. There is no need to review the whole LDF, only those issues or policies which local authorities wish to revisit.

For Bracknell we already have an adopted Core Strategy DPD and a set of saved policies. Our situation is unusual in that our Core Strategy contains housing numbers based on a draft version of the Regional Strategy that had a lower housing target than the final adopted version. This figure was justified based on the evidence available at that stage of the RSS preparation.

3.7 What if an LDF document is still being prepared?

Where local planning authorities are currently bringing forward development plan documents they should continue to do so. Authorities may decide to review and/or revise their emerging policies in the light of the revocation of Regional Strategies. Where authorities decide to do this they will need to ensure they meet the requirements for soundness under the current legislation. When undertaking consultation and sustainability appraisal on their draft policies, authorities should take an approach that considers the stage reached, the extent of work already undertaken and the scope of the policy changes they are making.

On the basis of this advice it would appear that the current advice is that we carry on with the Site Allocations Development Plan Document but have the option to revise the RSS housing target, provided this can be shown to be a sound approach. At this time, and based on other parts of the government advice, the Council is working on the assumption that the figure in the adopted Core Strategy is the housing target for Bracknell Forest.

3.8 Who will determine housing numbers in the absence of Regional Strategy targets?

Local planning authorities will be responsible for establishing the right level of local housing provision in their area, and identifying a long term supply of housing land

without the burden of regional housing targets. Some authorities may decide to retain their existing housing targets that were set out in the revoked Regional Strategies. Others may decide to review their housing targets. We would expect that those authorities should quickly signal their intention to undertake an early review so that communities and land owners know where they stand.

The implication of this is that, if we wish to change from the target set in the adopted Regional Strategy, we need to review the target and signal our intention to do so quickly. However, initial informal advice from GOSE is that we can use our adopted Core Strategy for this purpose, until and unless a review of this is undertaken.

3.9 Will we still need to justify the housing numbers in our plans?

Yes. It is important for the planning process to be transparent, and for people to be able to understand why decisions have been taken. Local authorities should continue to collect and use reliable information to justify their housing supply policies and defend them during the LDF examination process. They should do this in line with current policy in PPS3.

If we wish to adopt an alternative to the Core Strategy housing target, and/or when we start to plan for the period beyond 2026 the Council will need to establish a housing target based on a number of considerations including:

- *current and future levels of need and demand for housing*
- *the need to improve affordability and increase housing supply*
- *the availability of suitable land,*
- *the latest published household projections,*
- *economic growth forecasts,*
- *sustainability Appraisal, and*
- *existing and planned infrastructure and any new infrastructure requirements*

3.10 Can I replace Regional Strategy targets with the numbers agreed by local authorities for submission to the Regional Planning Board during the preparation of the South East Plan (the 'option 1' numbers)?

Yes, if that is the right thing to do for our area. Authorities may base revised housing targets on the level of provision submitted to the original Regional Spatial Strategy examination (Option 1 targets), supplemented by more recent information as appropriate. These figures are based on assessments undertaken by local authorities. However, any target selected may be tested during the examination process especially if challenged and authorities will need to be ready to defend them.

The option 1 number is very close to the figure in the adopted Core Strategy. The option 1 figure for Bracknell Forest was 10,780, the Core Strategy figure in Policy CS15 is 11,139 - the extra 359 units represent the carry over of a shortfall from the previous plan period. Subsequent advice from GOSE was that no allowance needs to be made for any previous shortfall. Removing the shortfall allowance would reduce our requirement by 2,000 from the adopted Regional Strategy target of 12,780 for the period from 2006 to 2026. Until and unless a review is undertaken, the Council will work on the 10,780 housing figure.

3.11 **Do we still have to provide a 5 year land supply?**

Yes. Although the overall ambition for housing growth may change, authorities should continue to identify enough viable land in their DPDs to meet that growth. Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments can help with this. Local planning authorities should continue to use their plans to identify sufficient sites and broad areas for development to deliver their housing ambitions for at least 15 years from the date the plan is adopted. Authorities should also have a five year land supply of deliverable sites. This too will need to reflect any changes to the overall local housing ambition.

Bracknell Forest can currently show a housing land supply of:

*3.5 years against the revoked Regional Strategy target of 12,780, and
4.3 years against the 'option 1' target of 10,780*

Note - These are estimates based on the latest available completions data.

Even with the lower target we are unable to demonstrate a five year supply and it is therefore important that we continue to work on the Warfield SPD and Site Allocations DPD.

There has been an unavoidable delay to the SADPD programme resulting from the change in national and regional policy which means that the final SADPD may not now be adopted until 2012.

3.12 **10. How do we determine the level of provision for travellers' sites?**

Government has advised that Local councils are best placed to assess the needs of travellers. Local authorities will now be responsible for determining the right level of site provision, reflecting local need and historic demand, and for bringing forward land in DPDs. They should continue to do this in line with current policy. *Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA)s* have been undertaken by all local authorities and if local authorities decide to review the levels of provision these assessments will form a good starting point. However, local authorities are not bound by them. The government has stated that it will review the relevant regulations and guidance in due course.

The Council does need to take account of the GTAA as the most recent evidence gathered on local need.

3.13 **Does the end of Regional Strategies mean changes to Green Belt?**

No. The Government is committed to the protection of the Green Belt and the revocation of Regional Strategies will prevent top-down pressure to reduce the Green Belt protection. Local planning authorities should continue to apply policies in PPS2. As part of their preparation or revision of DPDs, planning authorities are advised to consider the desirability of new Green Belt or adjustment of existing Green Belt boundaries, working with other local planning authorities as appropriate.

Bracknell Forest Council remains committed to the protection of the Green Belt and does not intend to review the Green Belt boundary in the Borough.

3.14 What does the recent 'garden grabbing' announcement mean in practise?

The government has also recently re-issued PPS3 (national planning guidance on housing). The changes include the removal of residential gardens from the definition of previously developed land.

Bracknell Forest Council will continue to judge each site on its merits and in accordance with its policies and guidance, including its recently adopted Character Area Assessments. To be clear, this change does not stop development of gardens within existing residential areas where it is considered acceptable to do so.

For the Site Allocations work, the priority order for identifying sites is set out in adopted Core Strategy Policy CS2 – Locational Principles. This establishes that we would firstly allocate land for development within Bracknell Town Centre, then using previously developed land and buildings in defined settlements and then other land within settlements where it would not conflict with other policies. The final priority in the sequence is extensions to defined settlements. This means that residential gardens would drop from the second level of the sequence to the third but that, providing there was no conflict with other policies, such sites would still be allocated in preference to urban extensions.

3.15 What does the deletion of the indicative minimum density mean?

The other change in the new PPS3 is the deletion of the national indicative minimum density of 30 homes per hectare.

The options consultation was carried out on the basis of site capacities arising from development densities of 35 and 40 units to the hectare so were in any event above the indicative minimum. There are a number of implications that arise if lower densities of development are adopted as the norm. These include lower ability to support public transport services, higher levels of car usage to access facilities and the need to allocate a greater area of land to accommodate a given number of homes. The government is still emphasising the need for sustainable development that minimises the need to travel, especially by car, and the need to use available land efficiently.

For Bracknell Forest our Core Strategy Policy CS1 also seeks the efficient use of land and buildings and locating development so as to reduce the need to travel, which would support higher densities. However, this is balanced by the need to protect and enhance the character and quality of local landscapes (Policy CS1) and respect local patterns of development (Policy CS7). Density level assumptions for the SADPD will be included in the preferred option for public consultation later this year.

Reducing Street Clutter

3.16 On 26th August 2010, councils were urged to get rid of unnecessary signs, railings and advertising hoardings in a bid to make streets tidier and less confusing for motorists and pedestrians.

3.17 Communities Secretary, Eric Pickles, and Transport Secretary, Philip Hammond, are concerned that the character of the country's urban spaces is being damaged and have written to councils' leaders calling on them to reduce the number of signs and other 'street clutter'.

- 3.18 The Government announcement identified a number of sources of guidance on how to achieve reductions and to some examples of best practice.
- 3.19 Government advice in Manual for Streets states that "the excessive or insensitive use of traffic signs and other street furniture has a negative impact on the success of the street as a place" and that "street signs are periodically audited with a view to identifying and removing unnecessary signs" (Manual for Streets, Department for Transport, 2007).
- 3.20 *For Bracknell Forest there is the opportunity to incorporate best practice advice in the forthcoming Streetscene SPD. A key aspect will be co-ordinating the approach to street signage in new development and combining signage and mounting signs on buildings as appropriate to reduce the number of individual posts.*
- 3.21 *A new edition of Manual for Streets is expected soon and will probably incorporate up to date advice on reducing clutter.*

Background Papers

None.

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ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 5 OCTOBER 2010

WORKING GROUP UPDATE REPORT Lead Working Group Members

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides an update in respect of the recently reconvened Working Group of the Panel reviewing highway maintenance and the newly formed Commercial Sponsorship Member Reference Group.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That this update report be noted.**

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Highway Maintenance

- 3.1 A working group was established by the Panel in September 2009 to review highway maintenance. The Working Group met on three occasions between September and December 2009. At its first meeting, the Working Group received an introductory briefing in respect of highway maintenance and discussed the scope of the review. The scope was agreed by the Working Group at its second meeting when it received a presentation concerning highway asset management. The Working Group received a briefing at its third meeting in respect of the financial and other resources given over to highway maintenance, the sufficiency of the current level of investment to maintain the quality of the highway asset, whether the Council maximised government funding and how the Council's expenditure compared to other local authorities. In the light of the proposed 2010/11 highway maintenance budget reduction of £315,000, Members decided that in times of financial constraint, safeguarding the existing highway asset had a higher priority than improving that asset and submitted a report to this effect to the Panel to consider at the time they met to consider the proposed budget for 2010/11.
- 3.2 The highway maintenance review was discontinued in January 2010 owing to a reduction in staffing resources. However, as other Overview and Scrutiny review work has subsequently been completed, resources have now become available to resume the review and the Working Group is being reconvened. The Lead Member has agreed that the review will adhere to the original scoping document and arrangements are in hand for its next meeting which will feature a recap of past work, asset management data concerning the condition of the Borough's highways, examples of highway projects and funding arrangements.

Commercial Sponsorship

- 3.3 The Council's Corporate Management Team have requested that the possibility of the Council attracting some income through an organised commercial sponsorship scheme be looked into and a Member Reference Group has been established to provide views and advice to the Director of Environment, Culture and Communities on

a prospective procurement of an agency service to attract commercial sponsorship income for Bracknell Forest. It has been labelled a Member Reference Group instead of an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group as the membership includes the Chairman of the Planning and Highways Committee and the Executive Member for Finance, Resources and Assets in addition to Members and Substitute Members of this Panel.

- 3.4 The Member Reference Group's first meeting was held on 20 September 2010 when it agreed that a commercial sponsorship scheme would be acceptable in principle and that the possibility of introducing a viable scheme be explored. A second meeting of the Group is being arranged to receive briefings in respect of the Council's corporate identity standards and the planning policies and constraints applying to signage and other issues relating to sponsorship. The briefings will inform a discussion to develop a framework around key policy, infrastructure and other limitations / issues which could apply to commercial sponsorship for briefing representatives of prospective agents who will be invited to the Group's third meeting.

Background Papers

None.

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ENVIRONMENT CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 5 OCTOBER 2010

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROGRESS REPORT Assistant Chief Executive

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1 This report sets out the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) activity over the period February to August 2010, also the significant national and local developments in O&S.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel notes the Overview and Scrutiny activity over the period February to August 2010, set out in section 3 and Appendices 1 and 2.**
- 2.2 **That the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel notes the developments in Overview & Scrutiny set out in section 4.**

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

(i) Overview and Scrutiny Activity

Changes to Overview and Scrutiny

- 3.1 Consequent on the reduction in the O&S officer team, various changes were decided upon by the O&S Commission on 28 January. These have included: a reduction in the frequency of O&S Progress reports to CMT and O&S Members from quarterly to six monthly; reductions in the frequency of public meetings, also reductions in the O&S Work programme. The changes have been implemented, and the O&S Commission has asked for a review of these new arrangements during 2010-11. The reduction in frequency of meetings has aligned the production of quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports with the O&S Commission's meetings, but it is causing some difficulties synchronising the PMR's with the Panel meetings, which are now every four months.

Overview and Scrutiny Working Groups

- 3.2 The table at Appendix 1 sets out the current status of the O&S Working Groups, along with the list of completed reviews.

Partnership Scrutiny

- 3.3 Good progress has been made with implementing the agreed approach to partnership scrutiny. The round of questionnaires and meetings with the Theme Partnerships is almost complete, with the final meeting in October. The Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group held its third meeting on 14 May 2010.

- 3.4 Representatives of the Audit Commission met the Chairman of the O&S Commission and the Head of O&S on 3 February to enquire about O&S of the Bracknell Forest Partnership, as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment process.
- 3.5 We put forward an entry for the Centre for Public Scrutiny's 'Good Scrutiny Awards' based on our joint working in the field of partnership scrutiny, and received a commendation. The judges said they shortlisted Bracknell Forest Council, *'because the group has created a powerful, independent and respected resource which is able to feed into the development of strategic planning. It also shows a commitment to partnership working and to the continuous development of scrutiny'*.
- 3.6 Over the next quarter, officers will draw together the results of the partnership scrutiny work in the Commission, the O&S Panels, and the Partnership O&S Group. This will be used to compile an annual report of that group as required in its terms of reference.

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

- 3.7 The O&S Commission now meets on a quarterly cycle. At its last meeting on 15 July, the main items considered were: receiving a progress update on the Bracknell Healthspace from NHS Berkshire East; considering and adopting the O&S Working Groups' reports on Preparedness for Public Health Emergencies, Housing and Council Tax Benefits, the Supporting People programme, and the Council's Response to Severe Weather; and reviewing the Performance Monitoring Reports for the Chief Executive's Office and Corporate Services Department, also the Corporate Performance Overview Report for quarter four (January to March) of the 2009/10 financial year. The O&S Commission's next meeting is on 28 October.

Environment, Culture and Communities O&S Panel

- 3.8 The Panel now meets on a four-monthly cycle. It last met on 22 June, and the main items included: electing a Chairman and appointing a Vice Chairman; considering the Department's Performance Monitoring Report for quarter four; and considering the O&S Working Groups' reports on Preparedness for Public Health Emergencies, Housing and Council Tax Benefits, the Supporting People programme, and the Council's Response to Severe Weather. The Panel's next meeting is on 5 October.
- 3.9 Additional to the work in the Panel and in its Working Groups, the Panel Chairman and a member of the O&S officer team have been involved, in an observer capacity, in an O&S review by Reading BC of the waste recycling contract.
- 3.10 As a number of this Panel's working groups have recently completed their reviews, there is some scope and capacity to undertake further work, and arrangements are in hand to resume the review of Highway Maintenance. Additionally, Members are likely to be involved in a Member reference group currently being established to explore opportunities for commercial sponsorship income from roundabouts and other means.

Health O&S Panel

- 3.11 The Panel now meets on a four-monthly cycle. At its last meeting on 17 June, the Panel elected a Chairman and appointed a Vice Chairman, and other key items included: receiving a presentation on the transfer of Community Health Services from NHS Berkshire East; considering the report of the working group on Preparedness for Public Health Emergencies; reviewing the position on the Bracknell Healthspace, and noting the draft minutes for the Joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny

Committee meeting on 30 March 2010. The Health O&S Panel's next meeting is on 7 October.

- 3.12 We have recently secured the agreement of the Chief Executives of the six NHS Trusts serving Bracknell Forest to our updated Health Scrutiny Protocol, summarising the legal and operational framework, and setting out the respective responsibilities of the Trusts and the O&S Panel. In reaching this agreement, we have had some quite complimentary remarks from the Chief Executives, for example:

- *'I am very happy to sign up to the requirements.....I welcome the opportunity to work closely with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to ensure we are listening and responding to our local community'* (CEO Royal Berkshire Hospital)
- *'I have now reviewed the code of practice that you sent through. It is the only one I have seen and as you know SCAS covers an area with quite a number of HOSCs. It is an extremely helpful and welcome document and one I would certainly like to see adopted as good practice in other areas.'* (CEO South Central Ambulance Service).

Children, Young People and Learning O&S Panel

- 3.13 The Panel now meets on a four-monthly cycle. At its last meeting on 30 June the Panel elected a Chairman and appointed a Vice Chairman. The main items considered by the Panel included: the annual reports of the Independent Reviewing Officer and Children's Social Care Complaints; receiving progress reports on new youth facilities in South Bracknell and the Playbuilder project; and receiving an update on the Working Group reviewing arrangements for safeguarding children. The Panel's next meeting is on 27 October.

Adult Social Care O&S Panel

- 3.14 The Panel now meets on a four-monthly cycle. At its last meeting on 8 June, the Panel elected a Chairman and appointed a Vice Chairman. The main items considered by the Panel included: meeting officials from the Care Quality Commission to discuss the new role for local authorities to comment on service performance; receiving the annual report on adult social care complaints; and receiving update presentations on the Departmental Service Plan, the Carer's Service, and the Personalisation Pilot. The Panel's next meeting is on 12 October.

Joint East Berkshire Health O&S Committee

- 3.15 This Committee now meets on a four-monthly cycle, rotating between the three Councils' venues. Bracknell Forest Council has assumed Chairmanship and officer support for this Committee for the 2010/11 municipal year. The last Committee meeting was on 16 June in Slough, when the Committee: elected a Chairman and appointed two Vice Chairman; appointed co-optees from Runnymede Borough Council and the three Local Involvement Networks; received a presentation from the Director of Public Health; received an update on the Working Group reviewing car parking charges at NHS Establishments; received an update on the budgetary position of Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals Trust; and conducted the annual review of the Committee's terms of reference. The Committee's next meeting is on 6 October 2010 at Wexham Park Hospital.

Other Overview and Scrutiny Issues

- 3.16 Responses to the feedback questionnaires on the quality of O&S reviews are summarised in Appendix 2, showing a consistently high score across the various questions posed.
- 3.17 Four-monthly review and agenda-setting meetings between O&S Chairmen, Vice Chairmen, Executive Members and Directors are taking place regularly for the Panels (quarterly for the O&S Commission).
- 3.18 External networking on O&S in the last six months has included Members and an officer attending the South Central Health O&S Committees meeting on 20 July in Winchester, and Members and officers attending the Centre for Public Scrutiny's annual conference.
- 3.19 Efforts were made to recruit to the vacancies of Parent Governor, Children's Social Care representative, Catholic Church representative and teacher representative in June. This resulted in one vacancy being filled. The other vacancies will be re-advertised in six months time.
- 3.20 The O&S Annual Report was adopted by Council on 21 April.

4 (ii) Developments in O&S

- 4.1 The O&S provisions in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act commenced in the period. The two new requirements on O&S have been addressed by: the Deputy Chief Executive being appointed as the statutory Scrutiny Officer; and Council adopting a new petitions scheme at its meeting on 21 July, which includes a new role for Overview and Scrutiny to review any petitions where the petitioner is not content with the Council's response.
- 4.2 The monitoring of the O&S function is carried out by the statutory Scrutiny Officer on a quarterly basis, who has commented that good progress has been made on the agreed programme of work by Overview and Scrutiny in the last six months and the quality of the work done continues to be high.
- 4.3 The regulations and guidance for the O&S provisions in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 are still awaited, despite the Act having commenced on 1 April 2009. CLG is continuing to work with the Centre for Public Scrutiny to develop these.
- 4.4 The Government's consultation entitled 'Strengthening Local Democracy', which the Council responded to, resulted in the previous government supporting a Private Member's Bill to extend the remit of O&S. The Private Member's Bill failed to survive its third reading debate.
- 4.5 The Government has published a major White Paper on the NHS, with a series of consultation documents, one of which proposes a complete change to local authority O&S of NHS services. Arrangements are being made to ensure that O&S Members' views are reflected in the Council's response to the consultation.
- 4.6 A new approach to improving public engagement was agreed by the O&S Commission, in consultation with the Leader and Chief Executive. This is in the course of being implemented, and has included the design and issue of a new publicity 'flyer' explaining the role of O&S and encouraging greater involvement

Background Papers

Minutes and papers of meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Panels.

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Alluse/Overview and Scrutiny/2010/11 O&S Progress Report

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORKING GROUPS – 2010/11

Position at 3 August 2010

Overview and Scrutiny Commission								
WORKING GROUP	MEMBERS	DEPT. LINK OFFICER	O&S LEAD OFFICER	SCOPING	DRAFT REPORT / SUBMISSION	FINAL REPORT / SUBMISSION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE	CURRENT STATUS
The Council's response to the severe weather	Finnie, Harrison, Turrell	Vincent Paliczka	None	√	√	√		Sent to the Leader on 20 July

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Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel								
WORKING GROUP	MEMBERS	DEPT. LINK OFFICER	O&S LEAD OFFICER	SCOPING	DRAFT REPORT / SUBMISSION	FINAL REPORT / SUBMISSION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE	CURRENT STATUS
Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults - Personalisation	Mrs Fleming, Turrell (Lead Member), Leake, Edger and Mrs Shillcock	Zoe Johnstone	Andrea Carr	√				Information gathering nearing an end

Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

WORKING GROUP	MEMBERS	DEPT. LINK OFFICER	O&S LEAD OFFICER	SCOPING	DRAFT REPORT / SUBMISSION	FINAL REPORT / SUBMISSION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE	CURRENT STATUS
Supporting People - Monitoring	Mrs. Shillcock (Lead) & Mrs. Fleming	Simon Hendeley / Clare Dorning	Andrea Carr	√	08/09 √ (Annual monitoring)	08/09 √ (Annual monitoring)		Sent to the Executive Member on 21 July
Review of Highway Maintenance [On hold]	Mclean (Lead) Beadsley, Brossard, Leake and Parish and Town Councillors: Edwards (Binfield) Kensall (Bracknell) Withers (Crowthorne) Mrs Cupper (Sandhurst)	Steve Loudoun	Richard Beaumont	√	The Commission decided on 28 January to suspend this review until other O&S reviews have been completed and resources become available. This is now expected to be in September 2010.			The Group has now met three times. The scoping document has been agreed, also a report to the Panel on the highways maintenance budget reduction.

Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel								
WORKING GROUP	MEMBERS	DEPT. LINK OFFICER	O&S LEAD OFFICER	SCOPING	DRAFT REPORT / SUBMISSION	FINAL REPORT / SUBMISSION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE	CURRENT STATUS
Preparedness for Public Health Emergencies	Burrows (Lead), Mrs. Angell, Thompson, Mrs. Mattick	David Steeds	Andrea Carr	√	√	√		Sent to the Executive Members on 22 July
Bracknell Health Space (Reconvened)	Virgo (lead) Mrs Angell, Baily, Leake, Mrs Shillcock	Glyn Jones/ Mary Purnell	Richard Beaumont					First reconvened meeting arranged for 5 August

Joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee								
WORKING GROUP	MEMBERS	DEPT. LINK OFFICER	O&S LEAD OFFICER	SCOPING	DRAFT REPORT / SUBMISSION	FINAL REPORT / SUBMISSION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE	CURRENT STATUS
Hospital Car Park Charges	Plimmer (Slough, Lead member), Virgo, Endacott (RB W&M) Jacky Flynn (LINK)	TBC	Andrew Millard (Slough BC)	√	√			

Children's Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel

WORKING GROUP	MEMBERS	DEPT. LINK OFFICER	O&S LEAD OFFICER	SCOPING	DRAFT REPORT / SUBMISSION	FINAL REPORT / SUBMISSION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE	CURRENT STATUS
Safeguarding Children	Cllrs Mrs McCracken (Lead) , Mrs Birch, Mrs Angell, and Kensall. Miss V Richardson, Mrs P Ridgway	Penny Reuter	Richard Beaumont	√				Information gathering about 1/3 completed

Completed Reviews

Publication Date	Title
December 2003	South Bracknell Schools Review
January 2004	Review of Adult Day Care Services in Bracknell Forest (Johnstone Court Day Centre & Downside Resource Centre)
May 2004	Review of Community & Voluntary Sector Grants
July 2004	Review of Community Transport Provision
April 2005	Review of Members' Information Needs
November 2005	The Management of Coronary Heart Disease
February 2006	Review of School Transfers and Performance
March 2006	Review of School Exclusions and Pupil Behaviour Policy
August 2006	Report of Tree Policy Review Group
November 2006	Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) – Review of the ASB Strategy Implementation
January 2007	Review of Youth Provision
February 2007	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2006
February 2007	Review of Library Provision
July 2007	Review of Healthcare Funding
November 2007	Review of the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy
December 2007	Review of the Council's Medium Term Objectives
March 2008	2007 Annual Health Check Response to the Healthcare Commission
April 2008	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/08
May 2008	Road Traffic Casualties
August 2008	Caring for Carers
September 2008	Scrutiny of Local Area Agreement
October 2008	Street Cleaning
October 2008	English as an Additional Language in Bracknell Forest Schools

Publication Date	Title
April 2009	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2008/09
April 2009	Healthcare Commission's Annual Health Check 2008/09 (letters submitted)
April 2009	Children's Centres and Extended Services in and Around Schools in Bracknell Forest
April 2009	Older People's Strategy
April 2009	Services for People with Learning Disabilities
May 2009	Housing Strategy
July 2009	Review of Waste and Recycling
July 2009	Review of Housing and Council Tax Benefits Improvement Plan
December 2009	NHS Core Standards
January 2010	Medium Term Objectives 2010/11
January 2010	Review of the Bracknell Healthspace
January 2010	14-19 Years Education Provision
April 2010	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2009/10
July 2010	Review of Housing and Council Tax Benefits Improvement Plan (Update)

Appendix 2

Results of Feedback Questionnaires on Overview and Scrutiny Reports

Note – Departmental Link officers on each review were asked to score the key aspects of each O&S review on a scale of 0 (Unsatisfactory) to 3 (Excellent)

	Average score for previous 11 Reviews ¹
PLANNING Were you given sufficient notice of the review?	2.8
Were your comments invited on the scope of the review, and was the purpose of the review explained to you?	2.9
CONDUCT OF REVIEW Was the review carried out in a professional and objective manner with minimum disruption?	2.7
Was there adequate communication between O&S and the department throughout?	2.7
Did the review get to the heart of the issue?	2.6
REPORTING Did you have an opportunity to comment on the draft report?	2.9
Did the report give a clear and fair presentation of the facts?	2.5
Were the recommendations relevant and practical?	2.5
How useful was this review in terms of improving the Council's performance?	2.6

¹ Road Traffic Casualties, Review of the Local Area Agreement, Support for Carers, Street Cleaning, Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities, English as an Additional Language in Schools, Children's Centres and Extended Services, Waste and Recycling, Older People's Strategy, Review of Housing and Council Tax Benefits Improvement Plan, and 14-19 Education.

ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 5 OCTOBER 2010

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12 Assistant Chief Executive

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to invite Members of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel to consider and suggest review items to be added to the Panel's draft indicative work programme for 2011/12, which is attached at Appendix 1 to this report. The indicative work programme will be included in the 2010/11 Annual Report of Overview and Scrutiny and will be adopted by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission once it has formally consulted the Corporate Management Team and the Executive thereon, as required by the Council's Constitution.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel considers and suggests review items to be added to the Panel's draft indicative work programme for 2011/12.**

Background Papers

None

Contact for further information

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Work Programme for Overview and Scrutiny in 2011/12

The work programme for Overview and Scrutiny in 2011/12 is aimed at maintaining a strategic and coordinated work programme based on major areas of Council and partner organisations' activity, of direct and significant interest to residents. The programme incorporates the routine, on-going work of Overview and Scrutiny and the completion of reviews currently underway. It proposes a limited number of new Overview and Scrutiny reviews which are seen to be timely, relevant, significant and likely to add value.

ENVIRONMENT CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL	
1.	<p>Monitoring the performance of the Environment, Culture and Communities Department To include on-going review of the Performance Monitoring Reports; review of any inspection reports or self-evaluations; and monitoring the action taken by the Executive to earlier reports by the Panel.</p>
2.	<p>Exercising pre-decision scrutiny by reference to the Executive Forward Plan</p>
3.	<p>2012/13 Budget Scrutiny To review the Council's Environment, Culture and Communities budget proposals for 2012/13, and plans for future years.</p>
4.	<p>Monitoring the Implementation of the Action Plan for Supporting People To monitor the implementation of the Supporting People Programme Action Plan on an annual basis.</p>
5.	<p>Highway Maintenance To complete the review of the Council's plans and performance for highway maintenance.</p>
6.	<p>Commercial Sponsorship To be involved in the Member Reference Group exploring the possible procurement of a commercial sponsorship scheme.</p>

Note – This programme may need to be amended to meet new requirements arising during the year.

ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

EXECUTIVE WORK PROGRAMME

REFERENCE	I020719
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TITLE: Bracknell Forest Borough Local Development Framework Site Allocations Development Plan Document

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To approve a Preferred Option of the Site Allocation Development Plan Document for Consultation under Regulation 25 (Public participation provisions)

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Resources need to be reviewed in the light of in-year savings and loss of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: All Bracknell Forest Council Chief Officers.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: To be determined.

DATE OF DECISION: 19 Oct 2010

REFERENCE	I019818
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TITLE: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation Supplementary Planning Document Draft

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To note the draft Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation Supplementary Planning Document.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Within existing budget.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: None.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: Public Notice

DATE OF DECISION: 19 Oct 2010

REFERENCE	I023917
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TITLE: Legal Agreement for Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Project.

PURPOSE OF DECISION: 1.To seek authorisation to collect contributions from new additional dwellings to be spent on a strategic sub–regional project.
2.To seek authorisation to sign a contract between BFC, Natural England and 10 other local authorities.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Within existing budget.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive Member for Planning, Transport & Economic Development

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: Not applicable

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: None

DATE OF DECISION: 19 Oct 2010

REFERENCE	I025009
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TITLE: Traffic Calming - Revised Policy

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To approve changes to the current Traffic Calming Policy.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Within existing budget.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive Member for Planning, Transport & Economic Development

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: None.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: None.

DATE OF DECISION: 4 Nov 2010

REFERENCE	I020424
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TITLE: Warfield Supplementary Planning Document

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To approve the Warfield Supplementary Planning Document for consultation purposes

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Within existing budget

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: Prescribed by Statutory Regulations

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: To be determined

DATE OF DECISION: 16 Nov 2010

REFERENCE	I024078
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TITLE: Consultation on Draft Local Transport Plan 3.

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To seek authorisation to consult on the draft Bracknell Forest Borough Local Transport Plan 3; its draft Implementation Plan; and a Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Resources need to be reviewed in the light of in-year savings.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive Member for Planning, Transport & Economic Development

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: To be determined but which includes the public, organisations with a transport plan interest and other interested parties.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: Letter/website/deposit of draft consultation documents in public buildings (e.g. libraries, council offices and town and Parish Offices).

DATE OF DECISION: 16 Nov 2010

REFERENCE	I025102
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TITLE: Declaration of Air Quality Management Areas

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To agree the method of informing stakeholders and the extent of the air quality management areas.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: None at this time

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: To be determined

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: To be determined

DATE OF DECISION: 16 Nov 2010

REFERENCE	I024080
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TITLE: Streetscene Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and Bracknell Forest Highways Guide for Development

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To adopt final versions of:

1. The Streetscene Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), and
2. Bracknell Forest Highways Guide for Development.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Resources need to be reviewed in the light of in-year savings and loss of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive Member for Planning, Transport & Economic Development

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: A public consultation was completed June/July 2010. Copies of the final documents will be made available on the website and in public buildings (e.g. Libraries, Council Offices and Town and Parish Offices) on approval and adoption.

DATE OF DECISION: 14 Dec 2010

REFERENCE	I023585
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TITLE: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation Supplementary Planning Document Adoption

PURPOSE OF DECISION: To adopt the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation Supplementary Planning Document.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Within existing budget.

WHO WILL TAKE DECISION: Executive

PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED: None.

METHOD OF CONSULTATION: Public Notices

DATE OF DECISION: 14 Dec 2010

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