

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
PANEL
21 JUNE 2011
7.30 - 8.40 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Angell, Brossard, Ms Brown, Finch, Finnie, Gbadebo, Ms Miller, Porter and Angell (Substitute)

Executive Members:

Councillors Mrs Hayes and McCracken

Also Present:

Max Baker, Head of Spatial Policy

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer

Mark Devon, Chief Officer: Leisure & Culture

Jane Eaton, Chief Performance & Resources Officer (Environment, Culture & Communities)

Simon Hendey, Chief Officer: Housing

Bev Hindle, Chief Officer: Planning & Transport

Steve Loudoun, Chief Officer: Environment & Public Protection

Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture & Communities

Anthony Radford-Foley, Head of Highways Asset Management

Emma Silverton, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor McLean

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Finnie be elected Chairman of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year 2011/12.

COUNCILLOR FINNIE IN THE CHAIR

Councillor Finnie welcomed new Members of the Environment, Culture and Communities Panel and thanked officers for the departmental briefing presented to Members before the Panel meeting had begun.

2. Appointment 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 2011/12.

3. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

The Panel noted the attendance of the following Substitute Member:

Councillor Angell for Councillor McLean

4. **Minutes and Matters Arising**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 11 January 2011 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

There were no matters arising.

5. **Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

There were no declarations of interest.

6. **Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

7. **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 2010/11 ending 31 March 2011. The presentation outlined the Department's revenue and finances as at March 2011. Staffing, key highlights and the forward look were also included.

It was reported that in the period to January 2011 there was a £1,120,000 change in the Gross Revenue Budget. The Net Revenue Budget was £37,718,000 with major variances totalling £988,000. Major variances included loss of income from Easthampstead Park Conference Centre and Downshire Golf Course and savings from waste management, car parks, Forestcare and housing benefits.

Capital finance as at March 2011 was £13,376.30 with an anticipated spend of 59.32%. The Panel noted that during 2010/11 the Department had undertaken 103 Capital Programmes. Capital schemes identified for carry forwards included:

- Programme of Leisure Section 106 Schemes (budget only)
- South Hill Park Grounds Restoration Project
- Bridge Structural Maintenance
- Cemetery and Crematorium Mercury Abatement
- BFC My Home Buy
- Highway Maintenance Depot

The average vacancy factor for the department was 8.70% which was a reduction from 11.6% in the same quarter during 2009/10. Overall the vacancies had remained at 62. The Panel noted that whilst the vacancy figure appeared high, taking into account the size of the department it was around 10% which was only marginally higher than other departments of the Council.

Staff sickness had continued to reduce and was at 5.94 FTEs for the year end 2010/11 compared to 6.36 FTEs in 2009/10. Figures for staff on long-term sick leave were reported to the Departmental Management Team meetings throughout the year. The Occupational Health Team monitored staff on long-term sick leave.

The Director highlighted key areas in the Department's forward look. It was noted that excellent value for money had been achieved with new contracts for waste collection, car park management and supporting people. The Department had also achieved

success in work to reduce energy consumption, improve highway infrastructure and progress the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

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

- The ATLAS project would allow automatic transfer of data for a range of Department of Work and Pension benefits and HM Revenue and Custom Tax Credits on to the Council's system. The project funding began in 2011/12 and would build on the data exchange already in place.
- The subway near the new Bracknell and Wokingham College had been re-painted as part of a programme developed to maintain all subways in the town centre. The subway was recoated with murals depicting an underwater scene and anti-graffiti paint at a cost of £16,000.
- Although the final quarter four recycling and landfill figures had not been received from the re3 waste disposal partnership at the time the PMR had been prepared as there was a six week data audit and validation process to be pursued, the figures had now been received and the Panel was assured that the partnership was performing well.

The Panel thanked the Director for his presentation and officers for their response to questions. Members congratulated the Department on the successful work undertaken in 2010/11.

8. Review of Highway Maintenance - Interim Report

The Panel received from Councillor Brossard, the Review of Highway Maintenance Interim Report undertaken by a working group of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

The Working Group had held productive meetings with officers and the Council's highway maintenance contractor to analyse the road surface and level of deterioration across the borough.

The Panel noted that the highway network in Bracknell Forest was generally in good condition and that the Council's response to pot holes was very successful with positive feedback received from residents.

Owing to membership changes, the Working Group had produced an interim report however, it was felt that the work of the Group should continue.

At the request of the Chairman, the Panel received a tabled report from the Head of Highways Asset Management which provided details of the background to the cause of the surface problems on the A322 Bagshot Road, and apprised Members of the current position.

The two-coat surface dressing had been chosen as the most appropriate surface for the A322 which had been included in the 2011/12 Local Transport Plan funded capital works programme.

The surface dressing had been applied to plan, however, the 'bedding-in' of the surface dressing had not taken place resulting in a significant loss of aggregate which meant the original road surface was visible.

A meeting between the Council and the contractor was held to discuss the nature of the failure and remedial works. Testing of the aggregate used, showed that it contained more than the permissible level of grit and dust which had prevented it

from adhering to the road surface. The failure was the responsibility of the contractor who was required to test aggregate before use.

The Panel expressed concern regarding the disruption caused to residents during the incident and any further disruption resulting from remedial action planned. It had been proposed that remedial action take place during the second half of July in the weekend beginning 16 July to reduce the impact on rush hour traffic. The start date or works would be confirmed in the near future.

The Panel noted that the cost of remedial works would be met by the contractor and that the Director had a meeting scheduled with the contractor's National Operations Manager to fully understand the cause of the problem. It was reported that to date officers had not yet calculated the resource from Bracknell Forest used to address the issue.

It was agreed that a further report regarding the A322 Bagshot Road resurfacing project would be brought to the next meeting of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the interim report of the Review of Highway Maintenance Working Group, be agreed and commended to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission for adoption and for sending formally to the relevant Executive Member.
- b) that Councillor Mrs Angell be appointed to the Working Group to fill the membership vacancy arising from the resignation of a former member.

9. **Commercial Sponsorship Member Reference Group**

The Panel received a report which set out the progress achieved to date by the Member Reference Group which had reviewed the possible merits of the Council entering into a commercial sponsorship scheme.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the update report of the Commercial Sponsorship Member Reference Group be noted.
- c) Councillor Gbadebo be appointed to the Member Reference Group to fill the membership vacancy.

10. **Work Programme 2011/12**

The Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered its draft work programme for 2011/12 and accompanying report.

The Panel noted that an extract of the 2010/11 Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report concerning work undertaken by the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel during the past year was being circulated to new Panel Members.

The Panel noted that the Director of Children, Young People & Learning had been requested to contact the Chairman regarding a review of the environmental management of schools. It was suggested that the Panel may wish this work to be presented at a future meeting.

Appendix 2 to the report suggested that a Working Group of the Panel be established to consider the next stages of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document. As the Executive and Council were scheduled to approve the next stages of the document in autumn 2011, the Panel agreed that this review work should take priority over other new work programme items.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the Panel's draft work programme for overview and scrutiny in 2011/12 be agreed with the additions set out in paragraph 1.4 of the report for adoption by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.
- b) a Working Group of the Panel comprising Councillors Finnie, Mrs Angell, Brossard, Finch and possibly McLean be established in order to consider and comment on the next stages of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document prior to its approval.

11. Executive Forward Plan

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

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel would be held on Tuesday 18 October 2011 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Easthampstead House.

CHAIRMAN