

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
PANEL
22 JANUARY 2013
7.30 - 9.40 PM**



Present:

Councillors Finnie (Chairman), McLean (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Angell, Brossard, Ms Brown, Finch, Gbadebo, Ms Miller and Porter

Executive Members:

Councillors Brunel-Walker and Mrs Hayes

Also Present:

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)
Mark Devon, Chief Officer: Leisure & Culture
Bev Hindle, Chief Officer: Planning & Transport
Claire Lewis, Waste Disposal & Recycling Manager
Steve Loudoun, Chief Officer: Environment & Public Protection
Louise Osborn, Emergency Planning Manager
Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture & Communities
Kevin Tidy, Assistant Engineer

27. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 23 October 2012 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

28. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest relating to any items on the agenda, nor any indications that members would be participating whilst under the party whip.

29. Public Participation

There were no submissions from members of the public in accordance with the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

30. 2013/14 Draft Budget Proposals

The Director of Environment, Culture and Communities presented a report on the key themes and priorities for the Environment, Culture and Communities Department as outlined in the Council's Draft Budget Proposals for 2013/14. The key themes included gross revenue budget, income, net revenue budget, current out-turn, and major variances revenue.

Budget pressures included Car Park income, Library income, and a 21% reduction in contributions from Crowthorne Parish Council and Sandhurst Town Council towards the running costs of Edgbarrow and Sandhurst Sports Centres.

Revenue budget proposal savings were in the areas of: waste management, car park business rates, cemetery and crematorium income, landscape holding account, nursery relocation, local transport implementation, West Berkshire weather contract, Coral Reef income, Central IT budgets, Travel Plans, Gainshare Recycling Scheme, pre-applications income, and Licensing income; totalling £672,000.

In response to Members' questions, the following points were made:

- Landfill tax had increased by £8 per ton. This was a different tax from the national Landfill Allowance and Trading Scheme introduced by the EU.
- There was £153,000 grant from central government for new flood and water management responsibilities including drainage. Funding had been secured for next year also.
- Officers were working over the Christmas period, so it was not known why the car park ticket machines were reported to have been full at The Look Out. Fewer people had been asking for refunds than initially anticipated and car park charging was on target at present. Income of £50,000 was expected to be achieved in this financial year.
- There were three or four fully disabled accessible bedrooms on the ground floor at Easthampstead Park Mansion.
- A £100,000 increase in income expected for Coral Reef was based on historic good performance over the past two years, and had been included in the core budget.
- The renewal of a standard rose for a further seven years had 'not applicable' under the proposed fee as this cemetery and crematorium service was being withdrawn.
- Golf fees and charges were set at the market rate and based on competition with other courses. It was thought that a standard price Monday to Friday would work more effectively than a separate price for Fridays. A value for money assessment had been undertaken and it was thought that this approach could generate more income. Fees were reviewed though to see if they were fair.
- Car park maintenance had been delayed owing to a procurement and legal issue and a re-tender had been required. There was also a delay due to the adverse winter weather but work due to be undertaken this year would be carried out with work scheduled for next year.
- There were specific schemes regarding development in relation to highway works which supplemented funding through grants for other works. Implementing the scheme to improve the Twin Bridges junction would support town centre viability and the normal integrated transport scheme was separate from this.
- The installation of solar panels at leisure centres would save approximately £13,000 in electricity costs. There were two combined heat and power units in existence at Bracknell Leisure Centre and Coral Reef which were old and inefficient. Consideration would be given to their replacement with a biomass unit which would require a feasibility study.
- There were no concerns regarding Disabled Facilities Grant funding as the department had never received less than proposed before.
- A Member commended the refurbishment works at the main Bracknell Library which had cost £30,000. This amount was not sufficient for a comprehensive refurbishment and further investment to create a community hub at the Library was welcomed.

31. **Quarterly Service Report (QSR)**

The Panel considered the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the Quarterly Service Report (QSR) for the second quarter of 2012/13 (July to September) relating to Environment, Culture and Communities (ECC).

Major variances in revenue had occurred in relation to Waste Management Refuse Collection Contract, Waste Management Disposal, Car Parking Income, Development Control Income, Cemetery and Crematorium Income, Landscape Services Vehicles, Coral Reef Income, and Licensing Income.

Capital schemes identified to be carried forward were: Car Park Maintenance, Local Safety Schemes, Skimped Hill/Market Street Accessibility Improvements Town Centre to Peel Centre, and Disabled Facilities Grants.

Key highlights included: Parks and Open Spaces Strategy approval, £108,000 awarded from Defra for a recycling incentive scheme, Highways Team at the top for satisfaction levels in National Highway and Transportation Public Satisfaction Survey, change in how sanctums would be charged at the Cemetery and Crematorium, new nursery at the Depot, additional income at Coral Reef, enhancement of Bracknell Library, and Ash tree dieback.

Further highlights included: Site Allocations Development Plan Document Examination, Public Realm services 2014, Corporate Peer Challenge, Budget proposals, Recycling Incentive Scheme, Transport capital investment programme, the impact of town centre implementation work on Environment, Culture and Communities, enhancement of Binfield Library, the re-opening of the main Bracknell Library, final completion of South Hill Park renovation project, Coral Reef maintenance closure, and an annual grant application for South Hill Park Arts Trust.

Less income was expected overall and a new pressure was the service agreement with the cremators. Fewer people were using the bus services in relation to the use of concessionary fares. Officers would re-locate from Seymour House to Time Square over the next few months. There would be a consultation regarding local safety schemes. The new nursery at the Depot was running well.

The Coral Reef proposals included the replacement of stainless steel roof bolts which were fracturing and if works were not all undertaken now then there may be a need to close again in October 2013. Once the refurbishment works regarding the roof had been undertaken they were expected to last a long time. The high cost of this repair would potentially result in a £300,000 cost pressure but the under spend in the department would mean that this would not affect the budget.

The aim was for Coral Reef to be re-opened on 9 February, if not the proposal was for it to be re-opened by the end of March 2013. Advice had been taken from a structural engineer and it was important for the work to be undertaken. Staff were cutting expenditure where possible during the closure because of the loss of income but the aim was to attract people back to the facility once it was re-opened.

In response to Members' questions, the following points were made:

- An appointment had been made in relation to flood and water management.
- Car park revenue at Coral Reef would break even.

- There had been much investment in Coral Reef and the facility was thought to compare well against new similar facilities being built. There was some concern regarding the stairwell to the flumes and future consideration would be given to making this more accessible and to allow the use of rubber rings. The performance of the recycling scheme cards would be observed before consideration was given to discount cards.
- Although a time extension had been granted in respect of electricity street works at Mill Lane, the works were being completed more quickly than expected given the depth of what was involved.

32. **Local Flood Risk Strategy**

Louise Osborn, Emergency Planning Manager, and Kevin Tidy, Assistant Engineer, presented a report on the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

The Council had a number of significant new duties in respect of flooding and flood risk management. Bracknell Forest Council identified as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) had a duty to comply with the Flood and Water Management Act (FWMA) (2010) and to manage present and future flood risk holistically and in a sustainable manner.

The associated duties of the FWMA had led the Environment Culture & Communities Department to manage flood risk for a period of 18 months to understand these duties and work through the funding sources and resource implications.

The preparation of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) was just one of the key duties placed on the LLFA. There had been increased national public awareness of flooding and this strategy would be used to determine how flood risk would be managed now and in the future in a local context.

A new post had been recruited to help develop the LFRMS, and the FWMA had come into force as a result of the extreme floods of 2007. Flood Risk Regulations came into force in 2009 which transposed the EU Flood Directive into UK legislation. This required all LLFAs to produce a Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment which involved collecting information on past flood history and identifying future flood risk areas.

The Borough was not at risk of significant flooding and where flooding had taken place it had been surface water flooding caused by intense rainfall. One key issue was sustainable drainage, and support had been sought to help with the work which needed to be undertaken. The three key areas were improvement, maintenance and prevention. Work was being undertaken with other agencies such as Thames Water and National Rail, and there was a proactive approach.

In response to Members' questions, the following points were made:

- When Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) became the drainage approval body it would have more control.
- The Flood Management Plan would be integrated with the Planning process and there would be co-ordination in relation to major new developments.
- Structures referred to in the asset register were, for example, ditches. Assets and ownership of structures would be identified to help identify responsibility in relation to, for example, drainage.
- The process for reporting flooding had not changed. Calls should be made to Customer Services at BFC and these would be logged with the Highways

team. Criteria would be established for investigation and publishing of flooding incidents.

- There would be additional funding to facilitate work and fee setting for permits and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems approvals were expected. A self-funding model was favoured.

33. **Recycling Incentive Scheme**

Claire Lewis, Waste Disposal and Recycling Manager, gave a presentation on the Recycling Incentive Scheme.

Participation in kerbside recycling was currently at 75% and 10% of the waste in the average green landfill bin was recyclable in a blue bin. 16% of what was being collected as recycling was currently contaminants and improvements in all of these areas would save costs.

Residents would need to have an e+ card to take part in the scheme as this would act as the reward card. Residents would be able to sign up to the scheme online and could apply for a card if needed at the same time. An activation pack would be sent out about the scheme once registered. An electronic tag on each blue bin would be read by the reader on the truck as the bin was emptied and the points credited to the registered address.

The data collected resulted in the account of the participating resident being credited with 200 points for each correct recycling collection. Residents could go online and log into their account to see how many points they had collected and what rewards were available. This could also be done over the phone or face to face at a council building and some of the leisure sites. To redeem points to get a reward the points were deducted from the e+ card.

One of the key features of this scheme was that it would be accessible to all households in the borough. Flats and properties where blue bins were shared by more than one household could sign up to the scheme. All shared bins would have the tags on before registration began.

If collection crews found contaminants before emptying a bin, it would not be emptied. If contaminants were found as the recycling was being tipped into the truck this could be noted in the system to stop the resident getting any points. In both cases a bin would be stickered so the resident knew why they had not been awarded any points for that recycling collection.

The rewards on offer for the beginning of the scheme were mainly leisure and library related, there were also some green rewards such as water butts and composters. The scheme was a two year pilot funded by a grant with conditions. Communication about the scheme was due to start the week beginning 4 February 2013. There would be training and briefings for collection crews, customer services and leisure front facing staff.

In response to Members' questions, the following points were made:

- The electronic tag on each blue bin would be related to a specific property registered with the recycling scheme. Tags would only be sent to those who registered.
- 200 points was the equivalent of £1 but had no cash value.
- Contamination would be identified at the source and at the end point of recycling.

- The scheme was based on participation and not the weight of recycling.
- The scheme would mainly be run electronically with residents registered online.
- The rewards with the recycling scheme were to encourage a change in behaviour and for people to be more active.
- Residents could opt out of the scheme after registration if they wished.
- There was a knowledge issue regarding recycling correctly and bottles were the only plastics which could be recycled locally. Butter cartons and drinks cartons were not recyclable. However, some plastics did have a high energy value when incinerated with landfill to create energy from waste.
- Some supermarkets were trying to improve their packaging in relation to information regarding what was recyclable but councils all had different recycling schemes with different coloured recycling bins.
- The Recycling Scheme would be reviewed in two years when the pilot had finished or before this if appropriate and the evaluation brought back before the Panel.

34. **Public Health Update**

The Panel received a report regarding the transfer of Public Health functions from the Primary Care Trust to the Council and the related public health role, responsibilities and contributions of the Environment, Culture and Communities Department.

The Public Health function was fundamentally about creating and maintaining the conditions that promoted good health and ensured that the population as a whole had the capability to protect their own health or was supported in doing so. This function was delivered by all departments within the Council and the services provided by the Environment, Culture and Communities already contributed to this agenda and had the potential to make an even bigger impact on the health of the population once responsibility for public health was vested in the Council from April 2013.

Prior to considering specifics, it was important for the Panel to note the four domains within which local authorities were expected to work:

- Domain 1: Improving the wider determinants of health
- Domain 2: Health improvement
- Domain 3: Health Protection
- Domain 4: Healthcare, public health and preventing premature mortality

In response to Members' questions, the following points were made:

- The breakfast club was thought to be useful as children would learn well if they were fed in the mornings.
- Those in receipt of benefits may be entitled to discounted leisure activities with their e+ card.
- Panel Members interested in forming a working group jointly with the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel regarding public health were Councillors Mrs Angell, Finch and Gbadebo.
- Balance was needed in relation to reducing service costs and increasing participation in activities to create income for the Council. The aim was for people to be encouraged to participate in activities and for activities to be accessible. If and when the pensionable age changed, then concessions may change as well for people over the age of 60 years.

The Panel noted:

- i. the contribution that was currently being made would continue to be made by the Department in improving public health within the borough; and
- ii. the opportunity to influence the future provision of public health services by ensuring the council embraced the full range of public health services that could be provided.

35. Local Development Framework - Update Report

The Panel received a progress update in respect of the Local Development Framework and Local Development Scheme, to include the outcome of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD) examination hearings.

SADPD was submitted to the Secretary of State on 29 June 2012 and examination hearings were held on 7 and 8 November (general matters) and 11 – 14 December 2012 (site-specific matters). At the end of these hearings the Inspector indicated that in his view, with modifications, the document may be found sound and invited the Council to prepare a schedule of modifications for him to consider. Officers had prepared a full schedule of changes including the main points raised by the Inspector.

In response to Members' questions, the following points were made:

- Additional sites available for development, if allocated, included a piece of land at Jennett's Park previously excluded from the developable area for the site.
- There would be very little impact on residential development from the change of use of office buildings to residential use without the need for planning permission. However, this could impact on Section 106 contributions.

The Panel noted the documents that currently formed part of the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Development Framework (LDF) and the stage reached in the preparation of other documents, particularly the Site Allocations DPD, that would form part of the Bracknell Forest Borough LDF on adoption.

36. Bus Strategy Review

The Panel considered a report recommending it to establish a Working Group to guide the emerging Bus Strategy.

In 2011, a reduction in available bus subsidy budget was proposed. Following wide consultation the decision was taken not to reduce services. It was further agreed that a review of the Bus Strategy was needed to inform future financial support. The decision was supported by the Overview and Scrutiny Working Group which had been set-up to review the budget reduction proposals.

In its recommendations, the Working Group proposed that the Bus Strategy should be updated and reviewed. To be able to implement the Bus Strategy for April 2014, a draft strategy would need to be developed by May 2013.

The Panel agreed that:

- i. a Working Group of the Panel, consisting of the same membership as the Working Group which previously reviewed the bus subsidy budget with the

addition of Councillor Ms Brown subject to her availability, be established to guide the Emerging Bus Strategy, ready for implementation in April 2014.

37. **Work Programme 2013/14**

The Panel considered items to be included in the Panel's Work Programme for 2013/14. A Public Health Working Group would be added to the Work Programme. Public Realm would be considered as an item. The Commercial Sponsorship Working Group was not in operation at present but would possibly review success in the future. Income through sponsorship for items such as envelopes could be considered.

38. **Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions**

The Panel noted the forthcoming Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions relating to Environment, Culture and Communities.

CHAIRMAN