

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND  
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY  
PANEL  
30 APRIL 2013  
7.30 - 9.10 PM**



**Present:**

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

**Executive Members:**

Councillors Mrs Ballin and Mrs Hayes

**Also Present:**

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)  
Mark Devon, Chief Officer: Leisure & Culture  
Michelle Donovan, Health Scheme Co-ordinator  
Bev Hindle, Chief Officer: Planning & Transport  
Steve Loudoun, Chief Officer: Environment & Public Protection  
Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture & Communities  
Amanda Roden, Democratic Services Officer  
Gail Siddall, Team Manager, Environmental Protection

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillor Gbadebo

**39. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 22 January 2013 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

**40. 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.

**41. Public Participation**

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

**42. 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 third quarter of 2012/13 (October to December) relating to Environment, Culture and Communities (ECC).

Major variances in revenue had occurred in areas including the Waste Management Refuse Collection Contract, Waste Management Disposal, Car Parking Income, Development Control Income, Cemetery and Crematorium Income, Landscape Services Vehicles, Coral Reef Income/closedown, Licensing Income, Libraries Income, Supervision Fees Adoption Highways, Traffic signals, Concessionary Fares, Building Control Chargeable Account, and Data Capture Tree Preservation Order Files.

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, Disabled Facilities Grants, Electronic Document and Records Management System, Westmorland Park, Bridge Structural maintenance, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace enhancement works, and Forest Road footway.

Key highlights included: improvements to Bracknell, Binfield and Crowthorne libraries; Public examination on the Site Allocations Development Plan Document; Re-opening of Coral Reef; Completion of restoration work at South Hill Park; Green flag applications; Flexible and mobile working; and Working with Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) on Smart Grid.

A £583,000 saving was expected, most of which was from waste management. Coral Reef was re-opened up to five days earlier than planned resulting in income loss of £230,000 rather than the sum of £440,000 expected in December 2012. Although there had been more expenditure than planned on Highways, there were various carry forwards and a significant saving in the devolved staff budget. Tree preservation orders would be inputted onto an IT system.

The 7% staff vacancy level was remaining stable and there had been a low turnover of staff. Staff sickness levels were slightly worse than usual but this was likely due to instances of long term sickness. There had been nearly 4,000 registrations for the brown wheeled bin scheme. The expression public realm referred to highways maintenance, street cleansing, landscape services, street lighting, and the related contract was for around £7-8million.

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

- Coral Reef was very well attended the first weekend following its reopening after a three month closure.
- There would be £56,000 net income from car parking charges at The Look Out and an extra £20,000 from parking tickets. 25% of visitors to The Look Out were parking elsewhere or had ceased to visit the facility owing to limited alternative parking. Work was being undertaken with Natural England to locate potential parking sites.
- Work was being undertaken with Scottish and Southern Energy regarding an 'Electric Avenue' project investigating the effect of whole streets using electric vehicles and solar panels, amongst other energy saving measures. Smart meters could detail the energy usage of a household, and information could now be gained at substation level. All of this information was being analysed by the University of Reading. People would be advised regarding grants available for energy saving measures. It was suggested that this work could include consideration of how micro generation of electricity by new housing estates might feed into the national grid to meet demand.
- In relation to the Community Infrastructure Levy, costs could be charged against receipts received in future.

- £35,000 had been used to repair traffic signals as more needed to be repaired than planned. This money may be recovered through insurance over time.
- The last booking at the crematorium was 4pm and bookings were of a two hour duration. The crematorium could open on Saturdays but evening and weekend services were at the discretion of the funeral directors. A number of slots were currently offered and not all of these were taken up. The service was based on demand.
- Progress against promoting the Disabled Facilities Grants scheme was graded as Amber because the government had given more money than expected but this money had not been spent yet. The funding was based on demand and an Adult Social Care needs assessment.
- Performance against indicator L146.2, concerning the percentage of the Borough where environmental cleanliness for detritus fell below the Environmental Protection Act standard, was slightly below target due to the significant amount of Autumn leaf fall in the third quarter of the year.
- Performance indicator L048.2, relating to the 'Number of days overrun on street works projects' was monitored, and enforced as much as possible. However, the Council had limited control of overrun and utilities companies often decided it was in their best interests to overrun a project and incur a fine.

#### 43. **Service Plan 2013/14 - Revised Key Actions and Indicators**

The Panel received and noted the revised key actions in the Service Plan 2013/14 as an aid to monitoring the performance of the Environment, Culture and Communities (ECC) Department.

Section 1 described the range of services included in the Plan. Section 2 included a graph, which reflected the significance of the services and how the ECC Department interacted with clients, and a graph which showed residents' satisfaction with services. Section 3 included indicators on service delivery, and Section 4 described the Medium Term Objectives and Key Actions.

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

- Progress against service delivery targets would be monitored and reported in Quarterly Service Reports.
- The Quarter 4 figures for 2012/13 would be forwarded to Panel Members by e-mail when available.
- On page 21 of the agenda papers, Indicator L181 would be investigated to see if it should read 'Percentage of appeals disallowed', rather than allowed.
- The ECC Department was thanked for their work with the provision of extra car parking spaces in Great Hollands.
- On page 15 of the agenda papers, it was reported that 53% of people surveyed by Qa Research in 2012 did not use arts facilities. There was no longer an arts development officer to encourage participation in the arts although the Northern Parishes Arts Week was an opportunity to promote the arts.

#### 44. **Public Health - Activate GP Referral Scheme**

The Panel received an update in respect of the Activate GP Referral Scheme. The majority of council functions had a role to play in helping the Council meet its objectives relating to public health. For these to be delivered in a manner that was accessible to the public it was important to optimise the use of universal public facing

services where possible. It was equally vital that relevant council staff rose to the challenge of promoting healthy lifestyles and the Activate team was a positive example of that.

The scheme had been operational for 13 years and was generally a 12 week scheme offering support for up to one year afterwards. The Bodyworks Fitness Centre supported GPs and the scheme received referrals from hospitals. There were nine qualified GP referral specialists, four of which covered cardiac support, and one of which covered lung support. The GPs worked alongside the Stroke Association, and 394 referrals were received last year regarding obesity and cardiac support.

One-to-one supervision could be provided through the scheme and the scheme could be operated over 24 weeks or 6 weeks depending on the needs of an individual. A Homestart programme had recently commenced and the first consultation with these participants was being undertaken. Some people referred to the scheme were not contactable or did not respond to contact, and more females were being referred than males. The reason for this was being investigated further.

An online option was being considered for GPs referring people to the scheme. Many people remained active after completing the scheme which promoted general health, wellbeing, and productivity.

The Panel:

- i. noted the Annual Report of the Activate Health Scheme; and
- ii. congratulated all Activate team members in delivering a successful GP referral scheme.

#### 45. **Climate Change Action Plan**

The Panel considered the Climate Change Action Plan prior to its approval by the relevant Executive Member in accordance with the Climate Local Commitment.

The ECC Department had recently signed up to Climate Local. The key themes of the Climate Change Action Plan were: Taking the lead, Energy, Transport, Waste, Procurement, Adaptation, and Raising awareness. How Bracknell Forest was performing against its own carbon emissions target would be known later in the year.

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

- Work was being undertaken with schools on their use of water and how water consumption was monitored.
- The Mayflower link, in section E1 on page 51 of the agenda papers, referred to the unit on top of street lights which reflected information back to a computer management system to detect and control how the light was working. The system was called Mayflower.
- It was queried whether solar panels could be used on the roofs of community centres in the Borough.
- A previous proposal to extinguish street lights for part of the night to reduce electricity consumption had not been pursued as there were insufficient Mayflower units to achieve this. Units would be installed more widely in the future.

#### 46. **Air Quality Management Areas**

The Panel received a briefing in respect of the two areas within the Borough designated as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) following the Executive's decision to amend their boundaries.

The Council declared two areas within the Borough as AQMAs in February 2011, which fulfilled the Council's statutory obligations under the Environment Act 1985 and the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) Framework.

AQMAs needed to be declared where air quality monitoring had shown that there was, or likely to be, an exceedance of the annual mean objectives for certain pollutants. In the case of the two areas declared, the pollutants were Nitrogen Dioxide, which arose from vehicle emissions.

Health effects of air pollution, such as asthma, respiratory problems, heart problems, and premature death, had been widely documented. Air pollution had a £20 million estimated cost and could cut life expectancy by 7-8 months. High pollution incidents were rare in the UK and in Bracknell Forest.

Under legislation there was a Statutory Duty, Part IV of the Environment Act 1995, to review and assess air quality. Trigger levels for Nitrogen Dioxide were measured at an annual level; other pollutants were not measured in Bracknell Forest as they were not an issue. There were reports annually, run by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and information could be found on the Borough Council's website. Detailed assessments were undertaken if trigger levels were exceeded, and further assessments were undertaken for a more in-depth review of local AQMAs.

There were 42 tube readers across the Borough which continuously monitored air quality every 15 minutes. The tubes were at a level where a person would be inhaling air. Many tubes had been placed at private residences and in the event of vandalism tubes would be placed in different areas. Tubes were removed, replaced and analysed for air quality monitoring purposes on a monthly basis

The speed humps in Crowthorne had been replaced with speed cushions and it was hoped that this would help to improve the air quality in this area with less stop/start of vehicles. A 50% reduction in Nitrogen Dioxide was needed and AQMA boundaries had been extended. New developments could be an issue in regard to the impact on air pollution and officers would be involved at the planning stage to consider this. An air quality action plan was being drafted which would fit under the Local Transport Plan 3.

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

- Every month results were retrieved from the tube locations and a consultant was undertaking work on the data to produce an annual figure.
- Air quality monitoring in Crowthorne was temporary. The trigger level was 40 and the annual level in this area was 26, so there were no immediate concerns regarding this area.
- The shape of AQMAs may change with the redevelopment of the town centre and air pollution levels in the town centre area would be monitored.
- The Borough Council was in discussion with health colleagues with a view to building in links to integrate with public health.
- The Council could consider establishing low emission zones although charging for entry into such zones would be an issue. Technology was

progressing and there were cleaner and greener fuels available; even with the expected increase in visits to the town centre from 2 million to 9 million air pollution may not reach trigger level.

- There were no known health risks at current air pollution levels recorded in Bracknell Forest.

**47. Local Development Framework - Update Report**

The Panel received a progress update in respect of the Local Development Framework and Local Development Scheme. The second examination round had been successful and there would be a progress report in the summer or autumn of 2013, with the aim of adopting the Framework and Scheme later in 2013.

The adopted Policies Map was based on saved policies in the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan and would be updated to incorporate changes resulting from the adoption of any subsequent Development Plan Documents.

**48. Working Group Update Report**

The Panel noted an update report in respect of the Panel's working group reviewing the Borough's Bus Strategy. The review had been constructive and a final draft Strategy would be submitted to the Working Group for consideration in due course. The Panel would be kept informed of progress.

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

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

It was confirmed that the phrase 'road based transport' referred to buses. The possibility of visits to community and leisure centres in the Borough, to the experimental environmentally sustainable houses in Slough, and the waste energy site, would be considered.

**CHAIRMAN**