

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND  
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY  
PANEL  
18 MARCH 2014  
7.30 - 8.57 PM**



**Present:**

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

**Executive Members:**

Councillors Mrs Hayes and Turrell

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Harrison and Ms Miller

**In Attendance:**

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)  
Mark Devon, Chief Officer: Leisure & Culture  
Colin Griffin, Team Manager Climate Change  
Bev Hindle, Chief Officer: Planning & Transport  
Steve Loudoun, Chief Officer: Environment & Public Protection  
Neil Mathews, Transport Development Manager  
Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture & Communities  
Amanda Roden, Democratic Services Officer

**37. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 21 January 2014 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

**38. 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.

**39. Public Participation**

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

**40. 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 2013/14 (October to December) relating to Environment, Culture and Communities (ECC).

Major variances in revenue had occurred in areas including The Look Out/Coral Reef Car Parking Income, Cemetery and Crematorium Income, Concessionary Fares,

Planning Policy Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Landscape Services, Development Control Income, Planning Policy Strategic Planning, and Departmental Running Expenses.

Capital schemes identified for carry forwards included: Replace Existing Combined Heat and Power Units, Disabled Facilities Grant, Linking Confirm to the Corporate Electronic Records and Document Management System – Smart Office, Skimped Hill/Market Street Accessibility Improvements Town Centre to Peel Centre, Town Centre Transport Capital Works Programme, Safer Routes to School, Upgrade Leisure Management System, Shoulder of Mutton junction roadworks, and Section 106 Parks and Open Spaces Improvements.

Key highlights included:

- Twin Bridges;
- Economic Development;
- Town Centre;
- Procurement of Public Realm;
- e+ Smartcard was being upgraded and developed as pre-paid debit card in conjunction with the Adult Social Care, Health and Housing department;
- Bracknell Leisure Centre and Coral Reef awarded Customer Service Excellence ;
- For the fourth consecutive year Bracknell multi storey car parks had been awarded the Park Mark;
- Blue Mountain.

Forward Look included:

- Town Centre Regeneration continued;
- Public Realm contracts were due to be awarded by the end of March;
- 30th Anniversary Bracknell Half Marathon in April;
- Budgets;
- Adoption of the (CIL);
- Twin Bridges: work would progress to the northern side of the junction;
- Residents parking next step was to be agreed;
- Blue Mountain;
- Edgbarrow Sports Centre/Bracknell Leisure Centre artificial pitches.

The town centre capital works programme was on schedule, and sickness amongst staff had reduced compared to the previous year. The Chairman congratulated the team on their hard work.

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

- It was the first time that test purchases had been undertaken for gambling and further details would be provided to Members. It was confirmed that this information would be considered by the Licensing and Safety Committee as well.
- There was a need to prioritise resources and so lighter fuel, fireworks and glue were unlikely to undergo similar test purchases at present. There was a current focus on alcohol sales and test purchases needed to be intelligence led and have the consent of court.
- Steps were being taken to recruit to a vacant enforcement officer post and the aim was for a quicker response to smaller concerns. The amount of enforcement work was increasing and officers were dealing with the backlog.
- The prosecution procedure was lengthy and officers were pursuing the process with the person charged with fly-tipping.

- Measures were being put into place to record compliments as well as complaints. This would need to be fed into the system and was being built up at present.

#### 41. **Recycling Reward Scheme Update**

The Panel received an update in respect of the Council's Recycling Reward Scheme and noted the progress to date. The aim of the scheme was as part of a two year sponsored trial to try to improve the quality and the quantity of the recycling collected in the blue bins. The two main objectives to achieve this were to increase the participation in the kerbside recycling scheme and to reduce the contamination levels in the blue bins. The scheme was being monitored and supported by DEFRA.

It was one year into the Recycling Rewards Scheme and over 6,000 people had signed up to the scheme. Many people had favoured the use of Coral Reef or Bracknell Leisure Centre as their rewards from the scheme and there had been a positive response from residents so far. The next stage was to offer South Hill Park events as part of the rewards scheme. People could also donate points to local causes and the scheme was co-sponsored by SITA. Other initiatives were being worked on and suggestions for rewards for the scheme were welcomed. DEFRA were pleased with Bracknell Forest's progress with the scheme.

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

- DEFRA intervention had prevented the composting of certain items which had led to lower levels than last year.
- Whether recycling was collected or not would depend upon the level of items which could not be accepted; a low level might mean that the recycling would be accepted but a high level would likely mean that the recycling would not be accepted.

The following comments were made:

- There were promotional photographs on Facebook and the scheme had been promoted in the Town and Country magazine. Recycling educational events had taken place at community centres and Councillors were encouraged to promote the recycling scheme.
- Congratulations were passed to the officers involved for their hard work and the success of the initiative.

#### 42. **Schools Annual Environmental Management Report 2012/13**

The Panel considered the Schools Annual Environmental Management Report 2012/2013.

It was the tenth year that this report had been produced and it had evolved over the years. The report was widely circulated and headteachers and bursars analysed the report before making changes in their schools. Sandy Lane Primary School was the first school to receive the Green Flag award. The eco schools programme needed a champion in each school to drive it forward; this could be a teacher, governor or parent.

Electricity usage in schools was increasing year on year, this was mainly due to the increasing use of technology in schools, such as computers, and extended services keeping schools open for longer hours. Gas usage was fluctuating and oil usage was decreasing. Fossil fuel use was declining. Electricity was a high cost for schools at present and had a higher emission factor, but overall the trend was positive for schools.

Schools were ranked in terms of performance, for example, in relation to costs, consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> levels. Some school buildings were older than others which affected their ranking. Data in relation to water usage was incomplete because some water meters were inaccessible and could not be read. A proportion of water meters could be read and readings had been taken from those sites, with the aim of upgrading the water meters at the sites which currently could not be read. There was a water cost per pupil.

The Chairman congratulated everyone involved on their achievement in this area and hoped that more schools would follow the eco programme in future. It was requested that the Director of Children, Young People and Learning be asked to re-establish the former environmental focus group consisting of education and environment officers. Councillor Mrs Hayes offered to help work with schools regarding environmental management.

A tax of £12 per ton of carbon emissions had been imposed to drive down carbon emissions and a lump sum payment had been taken from the school's fund. However, schools were no longer part of the Council's liability so the Borough Council had fallen below the registration threshold and it now no longer needed to pay the £12 per ton of carbon emissions. Schools had been excluded from this on a blanket basis by the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) and carbon emissions from schools would be dealt with by another means. The Borough Council could come back under CRC registration in future if the threshold for registration changed.

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

- Encouraging schools in relation to environmental management was thought to be a good example for future generations but schools also needed to use their own initiative.
- It would be useful to have champions in schools who could drive environmental management forward.
- The Department for Education (DfE) had made funds available for schools to spend on energy efficiency to be repaid interest free.
- Garth Hill College had a high electricity usage. Most schools would be prime candidates for solar photovoltaic systems and it would be a good investment in the long term.
- Heating was fuelled by a combination of gas and biomass. Carbon emissions from gas had decreased and carbon emissions from electricity had increased.
- The reason for Jennett's Park School's energy costs and usage trends increasing over the previous year was thought to be that the earlier figures were based on an incomplete year and that an additional classroom at the school had opened increasing the number of pupils there.

#### **43. Integrated Transport Capital Programme 2013/14**

The Panel noted a report on the Integrated Transport Capital Programme 2013/14.

The report provided an overview of the work being undertaken. Integrated transport was part of the Transport division, and the report set out activities and objectives of the Local Transport Plan Strategy. There was a three year implementation plan within which the scheme was present and reviewed annually. There were strategic highways improvements, including for the town centre regeneration and related to congestion.

There was promotion of sustainable transport modes and the variety of activities undertaken were expanded by successful bids for external funding. The Borough Council had obtained £1million grant funding from central government's pinch point fund. Funding was used from several sources for the capital programme, such as central government, Section 106 funds, and other central government funds which could be bid for.

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

- The budget for 2.3 of Annex A: Crowthorne High Street was £20,000 and the budget for 6.3 of Annex A: Bus Station (Year 1 of 2) was £300,000.
- Capacity improvement works were to enable more traffic to pass through each junction. There would be a three lane approach rather than a two lane approach to enable more vehicles to pass through alongside each other. The aim was for a new traffic infrastructure.
- Although some traffic lights had outdated or limited technology, the road from the M4 to Twin Bridges would have changing green time lights in response to traffic demand.
- Although the Shoulder of Mutton junction capacity improvement had been estimated to cost £200,000, this amount had been revised down to £180,000 following analysis and more detailed workings.
- The aim was for good cycle and walking routes through the development at Blue Mountain; this would be a priority as the new development moved forward.
- Priority corridors, such as Binfield Road, were being considered for possible improvements and linking up with communities in a more effective way.
- 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 of Annex A were all part of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and would be allowed for this financial year, just for this year.
- The bus station would cost £1.3million and the bus real time information for two years would cost £40,000. Some money was carried forward as some projects were unable to be undertaken due to the town centre regeneration.

#### **44. 2013/14 Highway Maintenance Programme**

The Panel considered a report giving an update on the Highways Maintenance Programme 2013-15 and noted the progress made against the original plan for 2013-14.

In response to a Member's question, the following point was made:

- There were £4million of roadworks which needed to be undertaken and a budget of £1.6million for these works. It was possible that another £150,000 may be obtained from the government.

#### **45. Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan Update**

The Panel received a progress update report in respect of the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan. The Local Plan set out the policies and proposals for the development and use of land in an area taking account of social and environmental factors.

The three key development plan documents proposed within the three year period were the Development Management Local Plan, a Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan, and commencement of a new comprehensive Local Plan.

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

- In relation to the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan, there would need to be an assessment of need and joint technical work across Berkshire. There would need to be a balance regarding how quickly to move the plan forward and an assessment of sites against what gypsy and traveller groups were looking for. This was a sensitive topic and the process would need to be carefully managed. The current plan would be able to move illegal encampments if needed.
- There was a plan to review the supplementary planning documents (SPDs) but there was not a requirement to have detail in the SPDs. There was not a specific timeframe and the character assessments and street scene SPD were being reviewed at present.

**46. Working Group Update Report**

The Panel noted an update in respect of the Panel's Working Group reviewing the Council's cultural services offering.

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

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

**CHAIRMAN**