

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND  
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY  
PANEL  
17 MARCH 2015  
7.30 - 8.35 PM**



**Present:**

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

**Executive Members:**

Councillors Mrs Hayes and Turrell

**Also Present:**

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)  
Mark Devon, Chief Officer: Leisure & Culture  
Andrew Hunter, Chief Officer: Planning & Transport  
Damian James, Head of Performance and Resources  
Steve Loudoun, Chief Officer: Environment & Public Protection  
Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture & Communities

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Ms Miller

**43. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 13 January 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

There were no declarations of interest or any indication that Members would be participating under the party whip.

**45. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

**46. Public Participation**

No submissions had been made by members of the public under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

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

The Panel considered the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the QSR for the third quarter of 2014-15 relating to Environment, Culture and Communities.

The QSR showed an underspend of £112k which was predicted to increase to £250k by the end of the year resulting in a significant saving.

It was noted that:

- There were pressures on the concessionary fares budget as a result of a change in the funding formula by the bus companies and an increase in bus users.
- Waste disposal costs were increasing as the economy recovered and more waste was being disposed of.
- The Downshire Golf Complex was predicted to meet its income target
- The Look Out income had increased as a result of more users visiting the centre.
- Savings had been made in the public realm contracts.
- £2 million had been carried forward in advance of the town centre highway works.
- There had been a re-negotiation of the Green Deal Community Fund since the original fund had been allocated. The fund would now run until April 2016.
- The average vacancy factor was 8.4% due to difficulties in recruiting some staff, most notably planning staff and this was affecting performance in the planning division.
- Staff sickness was increasing marginally but it was still low.
- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Planning Inspector concluded that the council's Charging Schedule was fit for purpose and that CIL would be introduced by the Council on 6 April 2015.
- The new contracts for highway maintenance, ground maintenance and street cleansing were going well.

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

- Up to £7K was available under the Green Deal Community Fund to residents to make environmental improvements to houses; the majority of which had been used for wall insulation, however, it could not be used for solar panels.
- Officers would include the actual figures for department performance indicators LO14 & L175 concerning the number of people injured or killed in road traffic accidents in the preceding 12 months in future QSRs.
- In terms of improving Great Hollands Library, the extension had been completed and the increase in opening hours was being staffed by volunteers.
- The town centre projects would not be affected as the difficulties being experienced in recruiting planners as the vacancies were at senior

planning levels and the town centre projects had an established staff resource.

- The Panel would be advised at its next meeting whether the fines issued in connection with the Residents' Parking Scheme covered the costs of operating the scheme.
- Following the appointment of Environmental Health Officers and a Regulatory Services Officer, these teams were now fully staffed in accordance with the staffing establishment.
- A complaint relating to a building control matter had led to a finding of maladministration by the Local Government Ombudsman.
- A £400k virement had been used for the preparation of detailed design and specifications relating to the tendering process for the works at Coral Reef.
- The Coral Reef roundabout works were due to be finished at around the same time as the re-opening of Coral Reef.

The Panel congratulated the department on the high number of compliments received.

#### 48. **Residents' Survey**

The Panel received a briefing on the findings of the Residents Survey 2014.

Overall the public perception of the Council was positive. The residents were pleased with the department's services which rated highest amongst residents' perception of the best three things about the Borough. The survey had been undertaken by telephoning residents randomly and asking questions unlike the old system where residents chose whether to respond or not. The new survey gave a more balanced view. The main area of dissatisfaction was street maintenance although the survey did not probe further to find out the source of dissatisfaction and members were informed that one likely source of confusion related to highway improvement works which had caused delays in the past few years.

The Panel discussed the methodology of the survey and commented that there was a difference between communication with residents and engaging with residents. Raising awareness of Council services was identified as a means of achieving this and it was suggested that future residents' surveys could ask respondents whether they were aware of the difference between the Borough Council and local town and parish councils and the services which each provided.

#### 49. **Schools Annual Environmental Management Report 2013/14**

The Panel received a briefing on the Schools Environmental Management Report 2013-14.

It was noted that the main objective of the report was to record and benchmark the borough's schools environmental management.

83% of Bracknell Forest Schools were registered with the Eco- Schools programme.

The report made recommendations for schools to:

- Use web based tools for monitoring environmental management.
- Conduct water audits.
- Increase recycling facilities onsite.
- Create travel plans
- Promote good housekeeping.

In response to questions, the Panel noted the following:

- Officers would investigate and report back on the savings generated by Bracknell Forest Council schools that had installed solar panels.
- The Council could not force existing schools to install solar panels but any new build schools would have environmental management systems incorporated in the design.
- Officers would pass on a suggestion to colleagues in Children, Young People & Learning that schools should be encouraged to keep their surrounding areas free of litter and the Council should consider carrying out spot checks
- The Green Deal Community Fund could not be used in schools as it was only for residential properties, however, Salix Loans were available to schools at a low interest rate.

The Panel noted the report.

#### 50. **South East Street Works Permit Scheme**

The Panel received an update on the South East Street Works Permit Scheme.

The scheme had begun on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2014. There had been 1800 permit requests of which 350 had been refused. £30K had been received by way of fixed penalty notices in the period from December 2014. A further update would be given to the Panel after the scheme had been operating for 12 months.

In response to questions, the Panel noted that:

- The amount of a penalty notice was dependent on the nature of the problem and the duration of the work.
- Each application had to be viewed in terms of existing work in the area so that whole roads were not being worked on at the same time which could lead to disruption, therefore some applications were being refused.

The Panel noted the report.

#### 51. **Review of Commercial Sponsorship Trial**

The Panel received an update on the Review of the Commercial Sponsorship Trial.

The Panel noted the report and agreed:

- 1 To endorse the Director's decision, having consulted the Commercial Sponsorship Member Reference Group, to undertake a full procurement in order to implement a permanent commercial sponsorship contract; and
- 2 That the Commercial Sponsorship Member Reference Group be stood down having completed its work for the time being.

**52. Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan Update**

The Panel received an update briefing on the Bracknell Forest Local Plan.

At a recent appeal a Planning Inspector had concluded that the Council in his view could not demonstrate that it had a five year supply of housing land. This meant that the Council would need to consider reviewing its local Development Scheme and start work on a comprehensive local plan. It would take 2-3 years to complete, however the background work undertaken and the contents of several existing plans would be incorporated into the local plan.

Officers would be consulting with Members' on the contents of the plan.

The Panel noted the report.

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

There were no scheduled Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions relating to Environment, Culture and Communities to be considered.

**54. Councillor Mrs Barnard**

The Panel thanked Councillor Mrs Barnard for her contribution to the Panel as this was her last meeting.

**CHAIRMAN**