



NOTICE OF MEETING

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Thursday 29 January 2015, 7.30 pm

Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House, Bracknell

To: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Councillor Leake (Chairman), Councillor Angell (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Baily, Mrs Birch, Ms Brown, Finnie, Gbadebo, Harrison, Heydon, Mrs McCracken, McLean, Sargeant and Virgo

Church Representative Members (Voting in respect of education matters only)

Two Vacancies

Parent Governor Representative Members (Voting in respect of education matters only)

Mr R Briscoe and Mrs L Wellstead

cc: Substitute Members of the Commission

Councillors Allen, Mrs Angell, Kensall, Ms Miller, Mrs Pile, Mrs Temperton and Worrall

ALISON SANDERS
Director of Corporate Services

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Published: 16 January 2015



Overview and Scrutiny Commission
Thursday 29 January 2015, 7.30 pm
Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House,
Bracknell

Sound recording, photographing, filming and use of social media at meetings which are held in public are permitted. Those wishing to record proceedings at a meeting are however advised to contact the Democratic Services Officer named as the contact for further information on the front of this agenda as early as possible before the start of the meeting so that any special arrangements can be made.

Note: There will be a private pre-meeting for members of the Commission at 6.45pm in the 4th Floor Meeting Room 1, Easthampstead House

AGENDA

Page No

1. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

To receive apologies for absence and to note the attendance of any substitute members.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 20 November 2014.

1 - 8

3. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Members are requested to declare any disclosable pecuniary or affected interest, including the existence and nature of the Party Whip, in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

Any Member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or an affected interest in a matter should withdraw from the meeting when the matter is under consideration and should notify the Democratic Services Officer in attendance that they are withdrawing as they have such an interest. If the Disclosable Pecuniary Interest is not entered on the register of Members interests the Monitoring Officer must be notified of the interest within 28 days.

4. Urgent Items of Business

Any other items which, pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman decides are urgent.

5. Public Participation

To receive submissions from members of the public which have been submitted in advance in accordance with the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

6. **The Council's Budget Consultation**
- To consider the Council's draft budget proposals for 2015/16: 9 - 58
- a) Corporate Services Department
 - b) Chief Executive's Office
 - c) Feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Panels and overall conclusions.

Confidential Annex

7. **Review of Business Rates and Discretionary Relief**
- To adopt the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's Working Group which reviewed Business Rates and discretionary relief. 63 - 104
8. **Residents' Survey**
- To consider the results of the 2014 Residents' Survey. 105 - 202

Performance Monitoring

9. **Corporate Performance Overview Report (CPOR) 2014/15**
- To consider the Chief Executive's Corporate Performance Overview Report for the second quarter of 2014/15 (July to September). 203 - 222
- In view of the size of the agenda, the Chairman has asked that any questions arising from the report should be referred to the Assistant Chief Executive in advance and only raised in the meeting if you consider the issue requires wider discussion.*

Holding the Executive to Account

10. **Executive Forward Plan**
- Forthcoming items on the Executive Forward Plan of a corporate nature are attached for consideration. 223 - 228

Overview and Policy Development

11. **Work Programme and Panel Activity Update**
- To note the progress against the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2014-15, and the reports from Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairmen on each Panel's progress against the work programme. 229 - 234
12. **Overview & Scrutiny Progress Report**
- To note the Bi-Annual Progress Report of the Assistant Chief Executive. 235 - 248
13. **2015/16 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme**
- To suggest items to be included in the Commission's Work Programme for 2015/16. 249 - 252

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next planned meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission will be on 19 March 2015.



**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
20 NOVEMBER 2014
7.30 - 9.42 PM**

Present:

Councillors Leake (Chairman), Angell (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch, Ms Brown, Gbadebo, Harrison, Heydon, Mrs McCracken and Virgo
Mr R Briscoe

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Baily, Finnie, McLean and Sargeant
Mrs L Wellstead

Executive Members:

Councillors McCracken, Turrell and Ward

Also Present:

Gabriel Amahwe, The Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company Limited

In Attendance:

Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Ian Boswell, Community Safety Manager
Alan Nash, Borough Treasurer
Victor Nicholls, Assistant Chief Executive
Justin Whitlock, Enhanced Integrated Offender Management Case Manager

27. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission meetings held on 4 September and 22 October 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

Further to Minute 26 of the meeting held on 22 October 2014, the Chairman requested that the Director of Children, Young People and Learning's report on the siren tests and the school cascading system be submitted before the next meeting.

28. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Mrs Birch declared an interest as the spouse of the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing. Councillor Mrs McCracken declared an interest as the spouse of the Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection.

29. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

30. **Public Participation**

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

31. **Thames Valley Probation Service and the Community Rehabilitation Company**

Meeting as the Crime and Disorder Committee, the Commission met with a representative of Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) and council officers to consider:

- the effect of recent changes to the probation service;
- the effects on re-offending locally: and
- future plans and priorities.

Gabriel Amahwe, Head of Operations (South), Thames Valley CRC gave a presentation on the recent changes to probation arrangements resulting in the division of responsibilities between the National Probation Service and regional CRCs, also future plans and priorities. He reported that initially there had been concerns about loss of critical mass and information sharing but, to date, the changes had been made with a relatively limited impact on service delivery in the Thames Valley. This was not to minimise the challenge as it would be essential to maintain and, where possible, improve, multi-agency collaboration. Preventing re-offending remained the top priority.

The Commission was informed that, from February 2015, ownership of the CRC would transfer from the public sector to a private provider, covering around 60% of probation work. The Ministry of Justice would manage that contract, in liaison with local Community Safety Partnerships. Any under-performance by the private sector provider would be transparent, in terms of increased re-offending.

Ian Boswell and Justin Whitlock reported on the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) a multi-agency process to prioritise interventions with offenders who commit the most crime and cause most harm to the community, and described the domestic abuse and other work which the Council does, in active partnership with various organisations

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

- The Police and other agencies had concerns about the impact of fragmenting the probation services, also how a private provider will use the data provided. There was an information sharing protocol in place within the Community Safety Partnership which would be reviewed under the new arrangements.
- The Ministry of Justice will manage contracts with private providers robustly.
- For young people already in the system, arrangements were in place whereby transition from the Youth Offending Service to adult services would begin eight or nine months before they became 18.
- The success of the IOM and other initiatives was measured in comparison with the performance of the Home Office group of comparative local authorities and with other Thames Valley local authorities. By both measures, Bracknell Forest was performing well in reducing crime.
- The IOM process was sensitive to people suffering from autism, and the Community Mental Health service was involved as necessary.
- The most effective way in improving the employment prospects of previous offenders was by working with them to develop a work ethic rather than simply

finding them a job that they might not be able to maintain. Housing for ex-offenders was often difficult to source.

The Commission thanked Mr Amahwe and the officers for the information provided and indicated that they might return to this topic after February 2015.

32. **Council Budgetary Position**

The Borough Treasurer gave a presentation in respect of the emerging budget position for the 2015/16-18 financial years. The presentation included an overview of the underlying principles of the Council's budget setting process, an overview of the assumptions made when initially planning the 2015/16 budget, the projected funding gap to 2017/18, an overview of the approaches adopted by the Council when addressing the funding gap, the usage of reserves, and a timetable setting out the key steps in the approval of the 2015/16 budget.

Councillor Ward reported that the budget proposal to be approved by the Executive on 16 December would go out for consultation and that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Panels would be part of the consultation process.

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

- The election of a new government in May 2015 could have significant impact on the Council's budget, for example the abolition of the New Homes Bonus. However, any legislative changes would be unlikely to take effect before 2016/17.
- A council tax freeze was sustainable in the short term. However the freeze was part funded by the present government, a situation that might change after the general election. Similarly, the New Homes bonus might cease if there was a change of government. More information would be available after the government spending review in June 2015.
- The assumptions made in planning the 2014/15 budget had been proved to have been realistic. There was likely to be a small underspend.
- As the Council's expenditure was increasing faster than its income, savings and/or contributions from balances would continue to be required.
- The contractual waste dispute was currently before the High Court. However, as the contractor had not accepted the previous rulings, it was not possible to say when the matter would be resolved.
- Income targets were set across departments. The underlying principle was that charges should increase in line with inflation but there was flexibility to reflect changes in market conditions.

The Commission thanked the Borough Treasurer and the Executive Member for their informative update.

33. **Executive Forward Plan**

The Commission received and noted a report summarising forthcoming items on the Executive Plan of a corporate nature.

In response to a Member's question, the Assistant Chief Executive reported that the results of the Residents' Survey 2014 would be submitted to the Executive prior to being made available to all Members.

34. **Quarterly Service Reports (QSR) 2014/15**

The Commission noted the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the QSRs for the second quarter of 2014/2015 (July to September) financial year for the Chief Executive's Office and the Corporate Services Department.

With regard to the Chief Executive's Office, the Assistant Chief Executive:

- agreed to address the concerns raised by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary on the accuracy of recorded crime statistics in a future report.
- reported that the 30 strategically important businesses targeted were identified by the amount of business rates paid and the number of employees.
- agreed to meet with Councillor Gbadebo to discuss his queries about Bracknell Forest's new brand identity.

With regard to the Corporate Services:

- Councillor McCracken undertook to investigate the roof leak at Great Hollands Community Centre and Library.
- the Assistant Chief Executive agreed to ask the Chief Officer: Customer Services to contact Councillor Ms Brown to discuss her concerns about customer services' telephony.
- the Assistant Chief Executive agreed to arrange for the appropriate officer to discuss with Councillor Ms Brown her concerns about the purchase of car park land related to the sixth form block development at Garth Hill College.

35. **Work Programme and Panel Activity Update**

The Commission received and noted a report providing an update on the Overview and Scrutiny Work programme for 2014-2015 and Panel activity, with particular reference to Working Groups of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

The Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Panel reported on the progress of the Panel's work programme.

In response to a Member's question, the Head of Overview and Scrutiny outlined the process by which Working Group reports and recommendations were considered by the Executive and the Executive's response reported back.

CHAIRMAN

ACTIONS TAKEN : OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION MEETING
20 NOVEMBER 2014

<u>Minute Number</u>	<u>Action Required</u>	<u>Action Taken</u>
27. Minutes of 22 October meeting	The Chairman asked that the report by the Director of Children, Young People and Learning (regarding the school cascade system) be available before the next Commission meeting	The Director's report was sent to Members on 19 December 2014
34. Quarterly Service Report – Chief Executive's Office	The Chairman asked to be informed of the outcome of the Community Safety Team's discussions with Thames Valley Police regarding the reported under-recording of crimes	The Community safety Manager has responded as below.
	Assistant Chief Executive to meet Cllr Gbadebo to discuss his queries on branding	The Assistant Chief Executive met with Cllr Gbadebo following the November meeting.
34. Quarterly Service Report – Corporate Services	Chief Officer: Customer Services to contact Cllr Ms Brown to discuss her concerns regarding telephony	The Chief Officer: Customer Services contacted Cllr Ms Brown, and has advised that the problems Cllr Ms Brown had experienced had helped officers to identify a system issue, which was being worked on to resolve. Also, the specific case Cllr Ms Brown had problems with was being dealt with.
	Assistant Chief Executive to contact Cllr Ms Brown to clarify her concerns regarding the purchase of car park land at Garth Hill, for subsequent response by Chief Officer: Strategy, Resources and Early Intervention	Cllr Ms Brown subsequently clarified her concerns. The concerns and the officer responses to those concerns are given below.

Response – Reports of Under- Recording of Crimes

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary has recently published their report 'Crime data integrity: Inspection of Thames Valley Police, November 2014'. In this report they comment favourably on the leadership and governance of the force which has recently adopted the national policing Code of Ethics.

The HMIC looked at one year's recorded crime from November 2012 to October 2013. The report does recommend that chief officers provide clear messages on the importance of crime data accuracy; the force should undertake an audit of all non-crime adults and children at risk occurrences; the force should establish a supervisory review of incidents opened as crime but closed as non-crime and the

force should reduce the backlog of appointments and appointment records awaiting update. The force crime registrar (FCR) is described in the report as having the full support from, and unrestricted access to, the chief officer team; he is the final arbiter and has sufficient resources. The report adds, 'Both the FCR and his deputy are very knowledgeable and clearly have the skills to ensure accurate crime recording'.

Finally the Chief Constable, Sara Thornton, has sent the following message to all her staff:

As the Code of Ethics makes clear it is critical that we are found to be absolutely honest and act with the highest integrity in our recording of crime. Performance pressures must never result in the manipulation or 'gaming' of figures. Accurate recording is essential to maintaining public trust, but also to enable us to analyse crime patterns and ultimately with decisions about resourcing; accurate recording helps us tackle the threat posed by those who commit crime.

When dealing with reports of crime our starting point must be to listen to what victims tell us; consistently apply the National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS), record crime in line with the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) and focus our efforts towards the investigation to identify and deal with the offenders appropriately. If it transpires during the course of the investigation that a crime did not occur, or was in fact a different type of crime, the rules allow us to reclassify or no crime the record. The decisions about what should be recorded are sometimes complex and I would encourage you to seek advice from Pete Warner and his Data Standards team when necessary. I am confident that through scrupulous honesty and the utmost professionalism we will continue to build on the confidence of our communities.

Sara Thornton

2014

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Ian Boswell
Community Safety Manager
3 December 2014

Concerns – Car Park Land, Garth Hill

Councillor Ms Brown stated:

My concern about the land for car parking at Garth Hill is not so much about the purchase: it is rather that this will not bring into use much more parking space than was previously available, as the B&W College allowed school use; and I'm not confident about parents taking notice of new organisation with in the car park, although the in/out gates should help flow.

It's good that the parking has now been secured permanently for school use, but there will still not be enough to cater for the massive new influx of student population that will occur when the new building is in full use. Parking for the Garth Hill College and Sandy Lane Primary is a nightmare, and it has yet to be seen if the changes to the car park will make a significant difference even before the new building is completed.

The other significant problem is that there are too many nearby junctions that are gridlocked because of concentration of vehicles in the area all trying to go in different directions all at once.

We need a better way to streamline access to the parking, and to get traffic out of the area quickly.

The relevant officers have responded:

I see no reason why significant improvements around car parking at this site, will not be effective. These steps have been subject to consultation with the school and highways colleagues and include the acquisition of Wick Hill car park and other measures being taken to mitigate the impact of the expansion will be effective. We will continue to monitor the situation once the facility is built and in use. It will be at this time and in the following months of use, that issues if they occur, will be evident. Key points to make are:

- The Council now controls who can use the car park and who cannot
- Of the additional 135 spaces in this car park, B&WC' s use is now restricted to no more than 30 spaces and this leaves the remaining 105 spaces available for drop off, pick up and overflow parking. Previously B&WC they could use all of the spaces if they wished to.
- B&WCs use is also time limited and from 2019 these 30 spaces will revert back to Council use, securing the full use of all 132 spaces.
- Following the pre-planning consultation, which I believe Cllr Ms Brown attended, Garth Hill College has agreed to create a further 58 parking spaces on the main school site, and these are currently being built.

David Watkins

Chief Officer; Strategy, Resources & Early Intervention

There have been discussions with Cllr Ms Brown previously regarding her suggested junction improvements - these have included installing traffic signals at the Bull Lane/Horseneille Lane/Albert Road intersection and also consideration of a direct access into Albert Road Car Park from Millennium Way. The former suggestion would not work technically, regardless of the whether such a scheme would be proportionate and I have advised Cllr Ms Brown of this previously. The latter suggestion would seem disproportionate given the scale of work involved and the prohibitive cost. Whilst it is acknowledged that Bull Lane and Albert Road are very busy during school start/finish times, no doubt exacerbated by the notably higher than average number of pupils travelling by car to this school since its redevelopment (a matter for the School's on-going Travel Plan work to address), this scenario is not exclusive to Garth Hill College. From past observations, the traffic congestion at start/finish times is short-lived and in the most part drivers are sufficiently courteous for the situation to be tolerable. I do not believe a large scale engineering solution to be the answer here, not least because any spare road capacity would simply backfill with those parents currently dissuaded from driving their child to school. I believe the key is reduce car journeys for those with alternative travel options, whether that be walking, cycling, car sharing or other initiatives within the School's ongoing Travel Plan work.

Neil Mathews

Transport Development Manager

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION 29 JANUARY 2015

DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2015/16 CORPORATE SERVICES, CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE & COUNCIL WIDE (Borough Treasurer)

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Executive agreed the Council's draft budget proposals for 2015/16 at its meeting on 16 December 2014 as the basis for consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, Overview and Scrutiny Panels and other interested parties. The Executive will consider all representations made at its meeting on 10 February 2015, before recommending the budget to Council.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission comment on the Corporate Services, Chief Executive's Office and Council Wide draft budget proposals for 2015/16.**

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Attached to this report are extracts from the 2015/16 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme reports relating to Corporate Services and the Chief Executive's Office, together with the Council Wide elements of the budget proposals. These extracts are for information and background to assist consideration of the Council's draft budget proposals and comprise:

- Revenue Budget Report
- Commitment Budget
- Draft Revenue Budget Pressures
- Draft Revenue Budget Savings Proposals
- Proposed Fees and Charges
- Capital Programme Report and Summary
- Proposed Capital Schemes including Annexe H (Restricted)

The full 2015/16 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme reports are available on the Council's public website as part of the wider budget consultation (<http://consult.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/portal>).

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS/ EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT/ STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES / OTHER OFFICERS/ CONSULTATION – Not applicable

Background Papers

None

Contacts for further information

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TO: THE EXECUTIVE
DATE: 16 DECEMBER 2014

**GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2015/16
(Chief Executive/Borough Treasurer)**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Under the Council's constitution, the Executive is required to consult on its detailed budget proposals with the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Commission and any other interested parties or individuals for a period of at least six weeks. This report summarises the current position on the Council's budget preparations for 2015/16.
- 1.2 At the time the Executive agenda was published the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement had not been announced and is not expected until late December 2014. Therefore, in the absence of the Provisional Settlement, the report is based on the indicative 2015/16 funding figures received in February 2014.
- 1.3 All comments received on these budget proposals will be submitted to the Executive on 10 February along with details of the final Financial Settlement. This will allow the Executive to determine its final budget package and recommend the appropriate Council Tax level to Council, who will formally approve the 2015/16 budget and Council Tax on 25 February 2015.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive:

- 2.1 **Agree the draft budget proposals for 2015/16 as the basis for consultation with the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and other interested parties or individuals.**
- 2.2 **Agree the Treasury Management Strategy and associated documents at Annexe E and request that the Governance and Audit Committee review each of the key elements.**
- 2.3 **Agree that the 2015/16 Schools Budget be set at the estimated level of grant income plus any accumulated balances, with the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning authorised to make amendments and agree budgets for schools and services centrally managed by the Council.**
- 2.4 **Approve the virements relating to the 2014/15 budget as set out in Annexes F and G and recommend those that are over £0.100m for approval by Council.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The recommendations are designed to allow the Executive to consult on its draft budget proposals for 2015/16 as required by the Local Government Act 2003.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The range of options being considered is included in the report and its Annexes.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

5 COMMITMENT BUDGET 2015/16 – 2017/18

5.1 Initial preparations for the 2015/16 budget have focussed on the Council's Commitment Budget for 2015/16 – 2017/18. This brings together the Council's existing expenditure plans, taking account of approved commitments and the ongoing effects of service developments and efficiencies that were agreed when the 2014/15 budget was set.

5.2 A number of changes are proposed to the Commitment Budget since it was last considered by the Executive in July and are reflected in the summary in Table 1. The most significant are set out below:

- The latest waste projections have indicated an increase in waste tonnages and a reduction in the amount being recycled. In addition, increases in landfill tax are now directly linked to RPI and will be reflected in the inflation calculation (£0.380m).
- The Local Development Framework has required updating due to changes in National Policy, including those brought in through the National Planning Policy Framework. This has resulted in additional costs for technical work and studies and has changed the spend profile over the next three years compared to the previous estimate (£0.163m). The new programme has been formalised in the updated Local Development Scheme approved by the Executive.
- Inclusion of the forecast recruitment and retention payments in Children's Social Care agreed by the Employment Committee on the 18 June (£0.130m). The budget increase will be reviewed once the actual number of employees entitled to the payment has been established.
- The projection for the Minimum Revenue Provision now incorporates the latest forecast for capital spend and receipts and the on-going under spend from 2014/15 (-£0.390m).
- Inclusion of the savings from the Aiming High programme agreed by the Executive on 23 September (-£0.108m).
- The allocation for pension fund contributions now reflects the actual lump sum deficit payments the Council will need to make over the next three years (-£0.197m).

Whilst these changes to the Commitment Budget are individually significant, their overall impact is to increase the Council's budget by only £0.011m (includes other minor changes) when compared to the position reported in July.

5.3 Taking account of these changes, Table 1 summarises the position and shows that base expenditure (excluding schools) is planned to increase by £1.005m to £90.779m next year, before consideration is given to allowances for inflation and the budget proposals identified by individual Departments in 2015/16. The commitment budget is shown in more detail in Annexe A.

Table 1: Summary Commitment Budget 2015/16-2017/18

	Planned Expenditure		
	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000	2017/18 £000
Base Budget	89,774	90,779	92,241
<i>Movements in Year:</i>			
Adult Social Care, Health and Housing	17	10	0
Children, Young People and Learning (excluding schools)	22	-30	10
Corporate Services / Chief Executive's Office	121	-65	-29
Environment, Culture & Communities	795	110	-166
Non Departmental / Council Wide	50	1,437	600
<i>Total Movements</i>	1,005	1,462	415
Adjusted Base	90,779	92,241	92,656

6 PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2015/16

- 6.1 Alongside the 2014/15 Local Government Financial Settlement announced in February 2014, the Government published a Provisional 2015/16 Settlement for local authorities. As expected, for such an early Provisional Settlement, this did not contain a great amount of detail but gave councils an indication of the likely level of funding to be used for planning purposes.
- 6.2 In July 2014 the Government published a consultation paper on potential changes to both the total amount of funding assumed in the Provisional Settlement and a number of technical changes to the allocation methodologies. The outcome of this exercise is expected to be known when the 2015/16 Provisional Settlement is published in late December.
- 6.3 Funding from central government is received through Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Specific Grants. The provisional amount of RSG announced in February 2014 for 2015/16 showed a fall from -£19.297m to -£15.171m, representing a 21.4% reduction. As noted above, further reductions may result from the consultation proposals outlined by the Government in the summer.
- 6.4 The level of Specific Grants will be announced as part of the 2015/16 Provisional Settlement. However, at this stage in the budget cycle the Council has already been made aware of two particular changes.
- The Education Services Grant (ESG) is paid to fund education support services which local authorities provide centrally to maintained schools but for the most part academies must secure independently; for example, human resources, financial supervision and asset management. It is not a ring-fenced grant: local authorities and Academies are free to decide how it is spent based on their individual circumstances. The June 2013 Spending Review announced that £200 million of savings will be needed to be made from the ESG in 2015/16; almost 20% of total ESG grant expenditure. A

consultation in March of this year sought views on how this reduction might be achieved. It is estimated that the Council will see a reduction of £0.426m.

- Parts of the discretionary Social Fund, introduced in 1987, were abolished by the Welfare Reform Act 2013 and replaced by a non-ring-fenced specific grant from April 2013 for the final two years of the Spending Review up to March 2015. The Government informed local authorities that the allocation of future funding would be assessed as part of the next Spending Round Settlement. It is intended that, from April 2015, local welfare provision would be funded from general grant to Local Government, instead of an identifiable sum being made available specifically for this purpose. The overall impact of this change in approach is expected to be a reduction in funding of £0.208m.

- 6.5 A third important stream of income for the Council is Business Rates, a proportion of which is retained locally following the introduction of the Business Rates Retention reforms in April 2013. The level of Business Rates change each year due to inflationary increases (set by central government) and local growth or decline as local businesses and economic conditions expand or contract.
- 6.6 The Government sets a baseline level of funding against which any growth or reduction is shared between local and central government. Taking into account the baseline funding level published in February 2014 and factoring in local circumstances, the budget projections assume income of -£21.247m. There is a risk associated with these projections due to the impact of the Town Centre regeneration and changes in the local economic conditions; however officers monitor total yield, revaluations, changes-in-circumstances, appeals and refunds on a monthly basis.
- 6.7 During 2013/14 a large multi-national company transferred on to the Council's valuation list which materially increased the level of business rates collected locally. When setting the budget for 2014/15 the Council's share of the resulting one-off surplus on the Collection Fund for 2013/14 and the on-going additional rates income were transferred into the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve. The 2015/16 budget proposals assume that the on-going transfer to the reserve will be reduced by £3m to help balance the budget.
- 6.8 Based on the number of additional properties that have been built and liable for Council Tax in the last 12 months to October, the budget proposals assume an additional New Home Bonus (NHB) grant of -£0.500m. This excludes a share of the NHB Adjustment Grant (NHBAG) that is top-sliced from the local government overall funding total to ensure there is sufficient funding to meet all the NHB allocations. Any surplus is returned to local-authorities on a pro-rata basis. The actual figure will be announced as part of the Provisional Settlement, but the current model assumes that the level of NHBAG received in 2014/15 (-£0.052m) will be continued in 2015/16.

7 COUNCIL TAX

- 7.1 Following the acceptance of Council Tax Freeze Grant and the resultant zero increase for the last four years, Council Tax at present levels will generate total income of -£45.944m in 2015/16. The Local Council Tax Benefit Support Scheme is treated as a discount i.e. a reduction in the calculation of the Council Tax Base. The latest information on the take-up of Council Tax support indicates that it will be significantly less than that budgeted for in 2013/14. Based on the latest forecast, Council Tax income will increase by £0.356m as a result in 2015/16. In addition a further £0.406m will be generated from an increase in the Tax Base primarily arising from the occupation of new properties during 2015/16. Based on these provisional figures, Council Tax income is therefore expected to be -£46.706m for 2015/16.

- 7.2 The Government has again prioritised keeping Council Tax increases to the minimum possible next year. To support this aim, the Department for Communities and Local Government has announced that it will give Councils who agree to freeze or reduce Council Tax in 2015/16 a one-off grant equivalent to a 1% increase in Council Tax. Any future support will be announced as part of the 2016 Spending Round following the General Election.
- 7.3 The Executive intends to accept the Government's offer to work in partnership with local authorities to protect council tax payers with a council tax freeze, thereby passing on the benefit to the council tax payers for a fifth consecutive year. The working assumption upon which the proposals in this report are based is that there will be no increase in Council Tax and that the Council will receive additional grant from Central Government of -£0.505m.
- 7.4 The Executive at its meeting in February will recommend to Council the level of Council Tax in light of the Final Settlement, the results of the consultation and the final budget proposals.

8 BUDGET PROPOSALS 2015/16

Service Pressures and Developments

- 8.1 In the face of significant reductions in public expenditure in general and in grants to Local Government in particular the scope to invest in new service provision is self evidently severely restricted. Nevertheless, it is important to retain a clear focus to ensure that the Council continues to protect and, wherever possible, improve services and to invest in the Borough, focussing on protecting front line services and delivering the Council's Medium Term Objectives. In preparing the 2015/16 draft budget proposals each department has evaluated the potential pressures on its services and these are set out in Annexe B. The following Table summarises the pressures by department.

Table 2: Service Pressures/Development

Department	£'000
Adult Social Care, Health and Housing	838
Children, Young People and Learning (excluding schools)	140
Corporate Services / Chief Executive's Office	182
Environment, Culture & Communities	424
Total Pressures/Developments	1,584

- 8.2 Many of the pressures are simply unavoidable and respond only to changing demographic trends, particularly as they principally relate to increases in client numbers within Adult Social Care. They do, however, also support the Council's overarching priorities and medium term objectives in the following way:
- protect and enhance our environment (0.289m)
 - promote health & achievement (£0.160m);
 - create a Borough where people are safe, and feel, safe (£0.888m);
 - sustain economic prosperity (£0.037m);
 - provide value for money (£0.086m).

- 8.3 In addition to these revenue proposals the Council continues to invest in its priorities through targeted capital expenditure. A substantial investment in the long term future of the Borough is planned, to secure the delivery of regeneration in Bracknell town centre, to ensure that there are sufficient school places for our children and young people, and to protect and enhance the Borough's outstanding leisure offer. Details of these major investments are contained in the capital programme report and in other individual reports elsewhere on tonight's agenda, but the cost of funding all potential commitments arising from these various proposals is included in the revenue plans before members.

Service Economies /Balancing the Budget

- 8.4 Members and officers have held regular meetings to determine options for savings and a list of potential draft budget savings has been developed. This list totals -£2.476m and is attached at Annexe C and summarised in Table 3. As in previous years, these economies focus as far as possible on central and departmental support rather than on front-line services. However, since it became a Unitary Authority the Council has successfully delivered savings of around £62m in total. Against this background of continually bearing down on costs and driving to improve efficiency it is becoming increasingly difficult to find further savings in these areas, which would not compromise the Council's ability to function effectively. Additional economies identified by Adult Social Care, Health and Housing resulting from the current take-up of the Local Council Tax Benefit Support Scheme have now been incorporated into the Council Tax calculation in paragraph 7.1. Treasury Management savings previously shown under Corporate Services have now been incorporated into Non Departmental budgets.

Table 3: Summary Service Economies

Department	£'000
Adult Social Care, Health and Housing	-698
Children, Young People and Learning (excluding schools)	-494
Corporate Services / Chief Executive's Office	-411
Environment, Culture & Communities	-813
Non Departmental / Council Wide	-60
Total Savings	-2,476

Significant Budget Decisions

- 8.5 Consideration and approval of the budget is a major policy decision. However, the budget, by its nature, includes a range of proposals, some of which in themselves represent important policy decisions. More details on each of the proposals are included in Annexe B.
- 8.6 As the budget report is a policy document and is subject to six weeks consultation, the identification of these issues within the budget report facilitates detailed consultation on a range of significant policy decisions.

Council Wide Issues

8.7 Apart from the specific departmental budget proposals contained in Annexes A and B there are some Council wide issues affecting all departments' budgets which need to be considered. The precise impact of these corporate budgets is likely to change before the final budget proposals are recommended, however the current view on these issues is outlined in the following paragraphs.

a) Capital Programme

As outlined above, the scale of the Council's Capital Programme for 2015/16 will impact upon the revenue budget and will itself be subject to consultation over the coming weeks. All new spending on services will need to be funded from new capital receipts, government grants, developer contributions or borrowing from internal resources. The proposed Council Funded Capital Programme of £16.818m and externally funded programme of £17.804m for 2015/16 features in a separate report on tonight's agenda. After allowing for projected receipts of approximately £2.5m in 2015/16 and carry forwards, but excluding the self-funding Invest to Save schemes, the additional revenue costs will be £0.034m in 2015/16 and £0.453m in 2016/17. These figures include on-going costs associated with the maintenance and support of IT capital purchases.

b) Interest and Investments

Investment returns are likely to remain relatively low during 2015/16 and beyond. The Bank Rate is forecast to remain unchanged at 0.5% before starting to rise from quarter 2 of 2015. Given the Council's approach to managing risk and keeping investments limited to a maximum of 6 months maturity with the exception of the part-nationalised UK Banks, the opportunity to achieve rates in excess of the Bank Rate is limited.

The 2015/16 budget is therefore based on an average rate of return of approximately 0.5% and reflects the lower cash balances as a result of the proposed 2015/16 Capital Programme. The net impact of these is a £0.085m pressure, being £0.034m related to the Capital Programme and a loss of income of £0.051m from the fall in the expected yield on investments from cash-flow movements.

There is a risk, however, that the Council's cash-flow will differ from past years as a result of the reforms to Business Rates Retention which has a dramatic impact on the cash-profile of the Council. As such any change in interest rates or cash balances will clearly have an impact on the overall investment income generated by the Council with every 0.1% reduction in the average rate of return adding a £0.03m pressure to the General Fund.

The Council reviews the annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement under the requirement of the 2011 revised CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes ("the CIPFA TM Code"). The Local Government Act 2003 required the Council to "have regard to the Prudential Code and to set Prudential Indicators for the next three years to ensure that the capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable". Annexe E outlines the Council's prudential indicators for 2015/16 – 2017/18 and sets out the expected treasury management activities for this period. It is recommended that the Executive agree the

Treasury Management Strategy and associated documents and in line with the Code of Practice request that the Governance and Audit Committee review each of the key elements.

c) Provision for Inflation and Pay Awards

The Commitment Budget excludes the cost of inflation on both expenditure and income. In past years, the Council has restricted the provision for inflation on prices as a general economy measure, to help address the underlying budget gap, although pay awards have been fully funded. In the context of the Council's overall financial position, it is again prudent to consider where the provision for inflation on prices can be limited as an economy measure, although some exceptions will be necessary to reflect actual increases that will not be containable without real service reductions or to meet contractual commitments. In particular it will be important to have realistic discussions with key providers about what level of inflation is genuinely necessary on some contracts and placements.

At this stage the inflation provision is not finalised, although for planning purposes a sum of £1.700m (£1.875m 2014/15) has been added to the budget. This will be achieved by:

- Building in the 2 year pay award for National Joint Council staff and assuming 1% for all other pay awards except for the Chief Executive and Directors for whom zero pay inflation is again planned;
- Negotiating to minimise inflation on contracts;
- Increasing fees and charges by 1.8% unless this is inconsistent with the Council's income policy.

The Council will need to consider where it is appropriate and necessary to provide for inflation over the coming weeks so that the actual inflation provision can be added to the final budget report in February 2014.

d) Fees and Charges

The Council established a policy for the review of fees and charges when setting the 2001/02 budget. This requires each Department to consider the level of charges against the following criteria:

- fees and charges should aim, as a minimum, to cover the costs of delivering the service;
- where a service operates in free market conditions, fees and charges should at least be set at the market rate;
- fees and charges should not be levied where this is an ineffective use of resources, i.e. the cost of collection exceeds any income generated.

It is estimated that many prices, where the Council charges users a fee for services, will need to increase by around 1.8% to recover the costs of those services. However, where current economic conditions and the market rate indicate a different percentage, for example for leisure income, this has been applied. Certain other fees also attract a different percentage as they are determined by statute. The proposed fees and charges are included in Annexe D.

e) Corporate Contingency

The Council manages risks and uncertainties in the budget through the use of a general contingency added to the Council's budget. Every year the Council faces risks on its budget in relation to demand led services, Business Rates and the general economic climate. In 2015/16 there will be specific significant risks in relation to:

- the implementation of a recent court ruling regarding the deprivation of liberty safeguards;
- the Care Act;
- and waste tonnages.

The level of risk and uncertainty is more significant than that for last year. The general Contingency included in the budget proposals currently stands unchanged at £1m but will need to be reviewed in order to set a realistic and deliverable budget in 2015/16.

The Executive will need to make a judgement on the appropriate level of contingency at its February meeting, taking advice from the Borough Treasurer who will need to certify the robustness of the overall budget proposals in the context of the Council's remaining general and earmarked reserves. All the reserves will be reviewed to ensure that they are sufficient to manage the financial risks facing the Council in the coming years.

Spending on Schools

- 8.8 The Schools Budget continues to be funded by grants, the most significant of which is the specific ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). This comprises three notional blocks; schools, which includes delegated school budgets and a small number of centrally managed services aimed at 5 – 16 year olds; early years, which again includes funds to pay providers and a limited range of central support services for 2 – 4 year olds; and the high needs block, which is generally centrally managed and is intended to fund the cost of education for 0 – 25 year olds when individual needs exceed £10,000. The DSG totalled £79.6m in 2014/15.
- 8.9 The allocations are not ring-fenced to each block, so more or less can be planned to be spent within each element, but a ring-fence continues on the DSG as a whole so that it can only be spent on the functions defined within the School and Early Years Finance Regulations.
- 8.10 Funding in each block was initially based on 2012/13 budgeted spend but has subsequently been updated for changes in pupil numbers, albeit at 2012/13 prices. However, changes in the number of high needs pupils have only been funded up to the minimum £10,000 cost. Whilst this ensures adequate funding for the increased pupil numbers in mainstream schools and early years providers, it does not cover any costs for new high needs pupils where they are over £10,000 which has caused financial difficulty for the Schools Budget. During 2014/15, there has been an in-year increase in high needs pupils of 22, at an average additional cost of £0.042m which amounts to total additional spend of £0.924m. None of this extra spend is covered in the funding settlement, meaning the Schools Budget is expected to carry forward an underlying over spend of around £1m. It is anticipated that there are sufficient general reserves in the Schools Budget to fund the over spend anticipated in 2014/15 but that additional on-going funding will be required.

- 8.11 For 2015/16, the Department for Education (DfE) has announced that £390m of new money will be allocated to the Schools Block element of DSG through a *Fairer Schools Funding for 2015/16* initiative, to be targeted to the councils currently receiving the lowest funding rates. This will result in a £1.5m increase (2.4%) for the Schools Budget.
- 8.12 Whilst the intention of the DfE is that this extra money will be made available for schools, the reality of the position in Bracknell Forest is that the majority of additional income will need to be spent on High Needs pupils. Individual schools and the Schools Forum have been informed of the likelihood that at least £1m of the increased income will not be available for allocation to schools but instead diverted to support high needs pupils. The expectation therefore is that £0.5m will be passed on to schools, but this will only be sufficient to cover the additional cost arising next year from a 2.3% increase in the employers Teachers' Pension Scheme Rate, effective from September 2015.
- 8.13 In addition to the DSG, schools also receive revenue funding from other specific grants including School Sixth Forms (currently £4.5m), the Pupil Premium (£2.9m), Primary PE and Sports Premium (0.295m) and the Universal Infant Free School Meals Grant (£0.86m). All of these amounts are subject to change in 2015/16.
- 8.14 Whilst it is expected that the schools and early years block elements of the DSG will be confirmed by the end of December, it is unlikely that the high needs block amount will be known this year. However, the DfE requires Councils to confirm the basis on which actual school budgets will be allocated, including per pupil and all other funding rates, by 20 January 2015 even though relevant information required to calculate budgets will not be supplied before 19 December 2014. To meet this requirement, 2015/16 school budgets will have to be set on the basis of the estimated level of DSG plus any other grants and accumulated balances. The draft budget proposals therefore assume the Schools Budget is set at the estimated level of grants and that any accumulated deficit or surplus is managed to a nil balance by the end of the funding period.
- 8.15 Decisions around the final balance of the budget between spending by schools and that on services managed by the Council is the responsibility of the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning, although the Schools Forum must be consulted, and in certain circumstances, agree to budget proposals.

Summary

- 8.16 Adding the draft proposals to the Commitment Budget and taking account of the corporate issues identified above would result in total expenditure of £82.504m as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of proposals:

	£'000
Commitment Budget	90,779
Budget Pressures	1,584
Budget Economies	-2,476
Capital Programme	34
Changes in Investment Income	51
Inflation Provision	1,700
In-year Business Rates Income	-3,000
Transfer of Business Rates Surplus to the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve ¹	-6,322
New Homes Bonus 2015/16	-500
Reduction in Education Services Grant	426
Social Fund Grant	208
Draft Budget Requirement 2015/16	82,484

¹This element of the transfer to the reserve was for one year only as it relates to the significant surplus achieved on the Collection Fund in 2013/14 which was one-off in nature.

- 8.17 Without the Provisional Finance Settlement assumptions have had to be made on the level of grant income. It has been assumed that the Council can anticipate income of up to -£77.786m. This arises from Revenue Support Grant and Business Rates baseline funding (-£30.575m excluding Council Tax Freeze Grant), additional Council Tax Freeze Grant (-£0.505m) and Council Tax (-£46.706m).
- 8.18 With the potential overall cost of the budget package being consulted on in the region of £82.484m, this leaves a potential gap of around £4.698m. Members can choose to adopt any or all of the following approaches in order to bridge the remaining gap:
- an appropriate contribution from the Council's revenue reserves, bearing in mind the Medium Term Financial Strategy;
 - identifying further expenditure reductions.

9 RESERVES

- 9.1 The Council has an estimated £7.0m available in General Reserves at 31 March 2015. Details are contained in Table 6.

Table 6: General Reserves as at 31 March 2015

	£m
General Fund	9.6
Planned use in 2014/15	(2.6)
Estimated Balance as at 31 March 2015	7.0

- 9.2 The Council has, in the past, planned on maintaining a minimum prudential balance of £4m. This assessment is based on the financial risks which face the Council and the Borough Treasurer considers these in the February report to the Executive at which a final decision on the use of balances can be taken, taking account of the financial position likely to face the Council over the next three to four years.

- 9.3 The Council's share of the Business Rates surplus for 2013/14 and the additional Business Rates income in 2014/15 will be transferred into the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve at the year end. It is estimated that there will be a balance of £11.7m available on the reserve at the end of 2014/15.

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The Council's constitution requires a six week consultation period on the draft budget proposals. In this context, it is inevitable that, of the broad range of options proposed for consultation, not all will necessarily be included in the final budget package. It is also likely that some further issues with a financial impact will arise between now and February. When the Final Settlement is known, the Executive can consider the prudent use of revenue balances to support expenditure in line with the overall medium term financial strategy, along with any further expenditure reductions.
- 10.2 It is suggested, therefore, that the normal process whereby the Overview & Scrutiny Commission reviews the overall budget package and determines whether any specific issues should be considered further by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels at their meetings in January, is followed. The proposals will also be placed on the Council's website for public consultation.
- 10.3 All comments from the Overview & Scrutiny Commission, Overview and Scrutiny Panels and all others will then be submitted to the Executive on 10 February 2015. This will allow the Executive to determine the final budget package and recommend the appropriate Council Tax level to the Council on 25 February 2015.

11 BUDGET MONITORING 2014/15- VIREMENT REQUEST

- 11.1 A virement is the transfer of resources between two budgets but it does not increase the overall budget approved by the Council. Financial Regulations require formal approval by the Executive of any virement between £0.050m and £0.100m and of virements between departments of any amount. Full Council approval is required for virements over £0.100m. During 2014/15 a number of virements have been identified which require the approval of the Executive. These have been previously reported to the Corporate Management Team which recommends them to the Executive for approval. They have been included in the Quarterly Service Reports. Details of virements between departments are set out in Annexe F. Details of internal departmental virements exceeding £0.050m are set out in Annexe G.

12 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 12.1 Nothing to add to the report.

Borough Treasurer

- 12.2 The financial implications of this report are included in the supporting information.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 12.3 The Council's final budget proposals will potentially impact on all areas of the community. A detailed consultation process is planned in order to provide individuals and groups with the opportunity to comment on the draft proposals. This will ensure

that in making final recommendations, the Executive can be made aware of the views of a broad section of residents and service users. None of the budget proposals require specific equality impact assessments to be carried out.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 12.4 A sum of £1m is currently included in the draft proposals to meet the costs of unpredictable or unforeseen items that would represent in year budget risks. The Executive will need to make a judgement on the level of Contingency at its meeting in February.
- 12.5 The Borough Treasurer, as the Council’s Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer), must formally certify that the budget is sound. This will involve identifying and assessing the key risk areas in the budget to ensure the robustness of estimates and ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place to manage those risks, including maintaining an appropriate level of reserves and Contingency. This formalises work that is normally undertaken each year during the budget preparation stages and in monthly monitoring after the budget is agreed. The Borough Treasurer will report his findings in February, when the final budget package is recommended for approval.

13 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 13.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Commission will be consulted on the budget proposals and may also choose to direct specific issues to individual overview and scrutiny panels. Targeted consultation exercises will be undertaken with business rate payers, the Schools Forum, town and parish councils and voluntary organisations. Comments and views will be sought on both the overall budget package and on the detailed budget proposals. In addition, this report and all the supporting information are publicly available to any individual or group who wish to comment on any proposal included within it. To facilitate this, the full budget package will be placed on the Council’s web site at <http://consult.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/portal>. There will also be a dedicated mailbox to collect comments.
- 13.2 The timetable for the approval of the 2015/16 Budget is as follows

Executive agree proposals as basis for consultation	16 December 2014
Consultation period	17 December 2014 - 27 January 2015
Executive considers representations made and recommends budget.	10 February 2015
Council considers Executive budget proposals	25 February 2015

Background Papers

None

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Commitment Budget 2015/16 to 2017/18

	2014/15 £'000	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000
Corporate Services / Chief Executive's Office				
Approved Budget	14,102	14,178	14,299	14,234
Vacating Seymour House/Ocean House		-22	-14	
Invest to Save - Time Square lighting		-1		
Invest to Save - Time Square insulation panels		-1		
Borough Elections		80	-80	
Revenue impact of Capital Programme - ICT maintenance & support costs		54		
Community right to bid grant		8		
Community right to challenge grant		9		
Human Resources staffing review		-12		
Residents Survey			29	-29
Motion picture umbrella licence		6		
Net Inter Departmental Virements	76			
Chief Executive / Corporate Services Adjusted Budget	14,178	14,299	14,234	14,205
Non Departmental / Council Wide				
Approved Budget	4,428	4,319	4,369	5,806
2014/15 Capital Programme (Full Year Effect) - Interest		13		
Minimum Revenue Provision		-203	309	300
2014/15 Use of Balances (Full Year Effect) - Interest		7		
Ceasing to pay Pension Fund contributions in advance		100	100	
Increase in employers Pension Fund contributions		133	253	300
Removal of the contracted out NI rebate due to the introduction of the new flat rate State Pension			775	
Net Inter Departmental Virements	-109			
Non Departmental / Council Wide Adjusted Budget	4,319	4,369	5,806	6,406

Description of Commitment Budget Items for 2015/16 to 2017/18

Department and Item	Description
Corporate Services / Chief Executive's Office	
Vacating Seymour House/Ocean House	The demolition of Seymour House is now complete and staff have moved from Ocean House to Time Square. The Council is however still liable for the lease of the building and associated costs until August 2015.
Capital Invest to Save – Time Square lighting	The LED and basement lighting will provide a better quality working environment and improve the environment in the car park. Both will reduce annual running costs based on the energy used and the maintenance supplied.
Capital Invest to Save – Time Square insulation panels	The installation of insulation panels on the external walls at Time Square has improved the energy efficiency of the building.
Borough Elections	The next scheduled Borough elections will be in May 2015.
Revenue impact of Capital Programme - maintenance & support costs (primarily IT)	<p>ICT have additional annual support and maintenance costs for :</p> <p>Maintaining the network following a network refresh. Time Square/Easthampstead House link for the transmission of data. Intrusion Prevention System firewall expansion to internal traffic. Wireless expansion access for staff, guests and the general public. Citrix licences to support a larger number of staff working flexibly.</p> <p>Domain Name System-Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol-IP Address Management system. Crucial in knowing what devices are active on the network at any instance for both fault-finding and investigating security incidents</p> <p>Network Management Software which reduces the workload of the network and helpdesk teams.</p> <p>Linking Confirm to the Corporate Electronic Records and Document Management System.</p>
Invest to Save - Customer Relationship Management System	Replacement of the current Customer Relationship Management system will enable the development of a customer account through the website allowing customers to log and track their cases on-line. The new system will enable integration between various business systems and result in reduced revenue costs through cheaper licences.
Community right to bid grant	The grant will cease in 2015/16.
Community right to challenge grant	The grant will cease in 2015/16.
Human Resources staffing review	Following a staffing review there was a reduction in management and staffing within Human Resources. The post was deleted during the second quarter of 2014/15 which was reflected in the 2014/15 base budget. The balance of the budget is removed in 2015/16.

Department and Item	Description
Residents Survey	The Council commission Qa Research to carry out a biennial survey of residents in the Borough in order to help guide future policies. Undertaken in 2014/15, it is next due in 2016/17.
Motion picture umbrella licence	The Council is legally required to hold a public performance licence for any of its properties where a motion picture may be shown. This licence will cover all non-school properties.
Non Departmental / Council Wide	
2014/15 capital programme (full year effect) -Interest	The full year effect of the loss of interest based on the 2014/15 capital programme.
Minimum Revenue Provision	The change in the principal repayment on internal loans used to finance capital expenditure.
2014/15 use of balances (full year effect) -Interest	The full year effect of the interest loss on the use of balances in 2014/15.
Ceasing to pay Pension Fund contributions in advance	The Council is unlikely to have the cash resources available to pay all employers and employees contributions, in full, in advance, from 2015/16.
Increase in the employers Pension Fund contributions	A phased increase in the level of contributions resulting from the triennial valuation of the Pension Fund as at 31 March 2013.
Removal of the contracted out NI rebate due to the introduction of the new flat rate State Pension	Removal of the contracted out rebate for occupational pension schemes in 2016/17 will significantly increase employer National Insurance contributions.

CORPORATE SERVICES/CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Description	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000
<p>Property Services</p> <p>Unable to achieve all the maintenance framework savings identified for the repairs and reactive maintenance budgets within the timescale. It is anticipated that the full savings will be achieved in 2016/17 and therefore the pressure is only for 2015/16.</p>	50	-50	
<p>Industrial & Commercial Properties</p> <p>The use of the Commercial Centre for internal storage, combined with the short to medium term plans for the facility (which mean long term leases cannot be given), have meant that the income target is no longer achievable.</p>	16		
<p>Community Engagement</p> <p>The Community Partnership project to promote disabled access will require the payment of an annual fee for the Disabled Go online access guide.</p>	7		
<p>ICT Services</p> <p>Increase in Identkey maintenance costs for Vasco, due to increasing usage of remote token security.</p>	5		
<p>ICT Services</p> <p>There is a requirement to increase various licence budgets:</p> <p>Huddle shared information services – this product was previously used by Public Health Services and additional licences were purchased for Emergency Planning purposes.</p> <p>MS Office- following increase in desktop and blackberry licences, annual support costs have risen.</p> <p>BlackBerry email on the move service – to provide the same level of security in the new BlackBerry Enterprise Services it is necessary to upgrade the licences.</p>	24		
<p>ICT Services</p> <p>As other services look to make efficiencies through a reduction in printing volumes and an increase in on line provision, the income target has become less attainable.</p>	30		

Property Services The Council's all properties Type 2 asbestos surveys are now out of date and an annual programme of surveys is required to comply with the revised Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.	50		
CORPORATE SERVICES/CHIEF EXECUTIVE TOTAL	182	-50	0

CORPORATE SERVICES/CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Description Impact	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000
<p>Members & Mayoral Services</p> <p>Councillors' access to the Local Government Pension Scheme ceases on the 7th May 2015.</p>	-27	-3	
<p>Operations Unit</p> <p>Following the restructure of the Facilities Service, two full time posts have been deleted and several posts have been re-graded.</p>	-60		
<p>Committee Services</p> <p>Following a staffing review the vacant Support Officer (0.54 FTE) post is to be deleted.</p>	-16		
<p>Departmental Supplies & Services</p> <p>Reduction in various supplies and services budgets across the Department.</p>	-44		
<p>Departmental Third Party Payments</p> <p>The costs of the Lord Lieutenants Office and Modern Records Storage Joint Arrangements with Wokingham and Reading Councils have fallen and savings to budgets have been made to reflect this.</p>	-3		
<p>Community Safety</p> <p>Reduction in the Town Centre CCTV budget through more efficient supervision of the system and a reduction in the budget available to distribute to projects identified by the Crime Disorder Reduction Partnership.</p> <p>The funding received from the Police and Crime Commissioner is also expected to be reduced and this will also impact on the projects the Partnership is able to support.</p>	-8		
<p>Unified Training</p> <p>Reduction in Social Care training budgets following a revision in methods of delivery and working more closely with partners to maximise cost efficiencies. There should be a limited impact on the service as opportunities for joint working are now available.</p> <p>In addition the Lunchtime Managers forum will be cancelled and there will be no future access to ILM 3 and 5 programmes.</p>	-12		

Description Impact	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000
ICT Reduction in the service training budget. Will need to ensure skills are kept up to date by investigating alternative methods of training.	-10		
Industrial & Commercial Properties The income target has been increased to reflect the above inflation increases anticipated for the Peel Centre. Any future void shops would however impact on the income levels achievable.	-135		
Chief Executives Office The Head of Performance and Policy post will be reduced from a full time post to four days a week, a reduction of 0.20 FTE. It is anticipated that the necessary cover will be provided by the Performance Officer within the team.	-12		
Operations Unit Increase to income budgets for the Integrated Transport Unit. Whilst these budgets are volatile, the budget will now reflect actual income projections for 2014/15.	-30		
Legal Services Increase in income target to reflect projected income for 2014/15. This is a demand led service and there is no assurance that these levels can be maintained beyond 2015/16, resulting in a reduction in the saving from 2016/17 onwards.	-28	8	
Local Tax Collection The Business Rates Collection Allowance received has consistently exceeded the budget in recent years. The saving assumes this will continue, however the allowance is determined by Central Government.	-10		
Departmental Indirect Employee and Travel Costs Reduction in Long Service Awards, overtime, Staff Public Transport fees and subsistence across the Department.	-7		
Departmental Income Increases to Graphic Design, various Registrars functions and Education Admission Appeals income targets in line with 2014/15 projected income.	-9		

Description Impact	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000
CORPORATE SERVICES/CHIEF EXECUTIVE TOTAL	-411	5	0

COUNCIL WIDE

Description Impact	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000
Finance A review of Treasury Management activity and the re-financing of capital expenditure have resulted in a saving to the Authority.	-60		
COUNCIL WIDE TOTAL	-60	0	0

CORPORATE SERVICES & CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT

2015/16 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service: Legal & Surveyors' Fees

Purpose of the Charge: To contribute to the costs of the service

	2014/15 Budget £'000	Proposed 2015/16 Budget £'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	88	118

Are concessions available? No

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: Work with our communities and partners to be efficient, open, transparent and easy to access and to deliver value for money.
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Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Legal & Surveyors' Fees for Property Transactions

New Lease	435.00	440.00*	1.1
Licence to Assign	325.00	330.00	1.5
Contracted Out Lease - fee is dependant on complexity	185 / 320	190 / 325	2.0
License to Alter - fee is dependant upon complexity	185 / 320	190 / 325	2.0
Deed of Variation - fee is dependant on complexity	185 / 320	190 / 325	2.0
Sale of Garages & Freehold Reversions	265.00	270.00	1.9
Letter/Deed of Postponement	115.00	120.00	4.3
Transfer (or hourly rate as appropriate)	310.00	315.00	1.6
Section 106 Agreements-£110 per hour	945.00	960.00**	1.6
Processing of subject access requests	n/a	10.00 new	

* With discretion for the Borough Solicitor to increase if time recorded costs exceed £440, at a rate of £160 per hour.

** With discretion for the Borough Solicitor to increase if time recorded costs exceed £960, at a rate of £160 per hour.

CORPORATE SERVICES & CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT

2015/16 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service: Electoral Registration

Purpose of the Charge: To Contribute to the costs of the service

	2014/15 Budget £'000	Proposed 2015/16 Budget £'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	5	5

Are concessions available? No

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: Work with our communities and partners to be efficient, open, transparent and easy to access and to deliver value for money.

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Electoral Registration			
Certificate of current register	21.00	21.00	0.0
Certificate of historical registration	60.00	60.00	0.0
Street Index	21.00	22.00	4.5

Register of Electors:			
- in data format £1.50 for every 1,000 entries of part thereof plus the current fee#	20.00	20.00	0.0
- in paper format £5 for each 1000 entries or part thereof plus the current fee#	10.00	10.00	0.0
Register of Overseas Electors:			
- in data format £1.50 for every 1000 entries or part thereof plus the current fee#	20.00	20.00	0.0
- in paper format £5 for each 1000 entries or part thereof plus the current fee#	10.00	10.00	0.0
Marked copy of the Register of Electors:			
- in data format £1 for every 1000 entries or part thereof plus the current fee#	10.00	10.00	0.0
- in paper format £2 for each 1000 entries or part thereof plus the current fee#	10.00	10.00	0.0

These are statutory charges that are determined nationally through legislation. There is currently no indication that they might alter during 2015/16.

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase	Proposed Fee (Inc VAT)
	£.p	£.p	%	£.p

Household Delivery				
Delivery Administration fee:				
- across more than half of the Borough	n/a	180.00	new	216.00
- across less than half of the Borough	n/a	135.00	new	162.00
Plus charges per leaflet/property				
-rural properties per leaflet/property	n/a	0.20	new	0.24
-urban properties per leaflet/property	n/a	0.15	new	0.18
-each additional leaflet (both urban and rural)	n/a	0.02	new	0.02
Band A properties - per leaflet/property	0.12	n/a		
Band B properties - per leaflet/property	0.13	n/a		
Band C properties - per leaflet/property	0.14	n/a		
Band D properties - per leaflet/property	0.16	n/a		
Band E properties - per leaflet/property	0.19	n/a		

Charges may increase depending on the size and weight of the documents

The Household Delivery Service has been reviewed to ensure that the fees and charges cover the cost of providing the service.

CORPORATE SERVICES & CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT

2015/16 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service: Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Services

Purpose of the Charge: To Contribute to the costs of the service

The fees and charges have been reviewed to ensure that they cover the cost of providing each service and that they reflect the relocation of the Register Office to Time Square and the potential use of the Register Office for small marriage and citizenship ceremonies. The charges for the Nationality and Settlement Checking Services have also been increased to reflect the longer appointment times required to deal with the increased complexity of the process and the regularity of the requirement for follow-up appointments. The schedule also reflects the introduction of a new service to convert a civil partnership to a marriage under the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013.

Charges have been introduced for a two year period to reflect the fact that ceremonies can be booked for future financial years and to capture the rise in fees required to cover costs.

	2014/15 Budget £'000	Proposed 2015/16 Budget £'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	180	190

Are concessions available? No, but a variety of services provided at differing prices.

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: Work with our communities and partners to be efficient, open, transparent and easy to access and to deliver value for money.

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase	Proposed Fee (Inc VAT)
	£.p	£.p	%	£.p

Change of Name Service

Adult	36.67	37.50	2.3	45.00
- Additional deed purchased at time of appointment	6.25	6.25	0.0	7.50
- Copy of archived deed	11.67	12.08	3.5	14.50
Child	41.25	42.08	2.0	50.50
- Additional deed purchased at time of appointment	6.25	6.25	0.0	7.50
- Copy of archived deed	11.67	12.08	3.5	14.50
Family (parents and up to two children)	117.92	120.00	1.8	144.00

Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase	Proposed Fee (Inc VAT)	2016/17 proposed Fee (incl VAT where applicable)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%	£.p	£.p	%
Licensing of premises as marriage venues (three year licence)	1,310.00	1,330.00	1.5		n/a	
Notice of Intent fee for marriage and civil partnership ceremonies at the Register Office#	35.00	35.00	0.0		n/a	
Notice of Intent fee for marriage and civil partnership away from the Register Office (includes fee for entry in marriage notice book):						
- for a housebound person#	82.00	82.00	0.0		n/a	
- for a detained person#	93.00	103.00	10.8		n/a	
Attendance of Registrar for a marriage or civil partnership:						
- at a registered building#	84.00	86.00	2.4		n/a	
- of a housebound person#	79.00	81.00	2.5		n/a	
- of a detained person#	86.00	88.00	2.3		n/a	
Attendance of Superintendent Registrar for a marriage or civil partnership:						
- of a housebound person#	84.00	84.00	0.0		n/a	
- of a detained person#	94.00	94.00	0.0		n/a	
Attendance of Superintendent Registrar for a marriage or civil partnership at approved premises (including 1/2 hour pre-ceremony appointment):						
- Monday - Friday	310.00	320.00	3.2		330.00	3.1
- Saturday	380.00	390.00	2.6		400.00	2.6
- Sunday/Bank Holiday	440.00	450.00	2.3		460.00	2.2
Marriage or Civil Partnership Ceremony in the Register Office or the Syrett Small Ceremony Room#	46.00	46.00	0.0		n/a	

These are statutory charges that are determined nationally through legislation. There is currently no indication that they might alter during 2015/16.

CORPORATE SERVICES & CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT

2015/16 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase	Proposed Fee (Inc VAT)	2016/17 Proposed Fee (incl VAT where applicable)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%	£.p	£.p	%
Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies (Cont)						
Marriage or Civil Partnership Ceremony in the Syrett Large Ceremony Room (<i>includes Superintendent Registrar's and registrar's attendance</i>):						
- Monday - Thursday	125.00	130.00	4.0		135.00	3.8
- Friday	150.00	155.00	3.3		160.00	3.2
- Saturday morning	170.00	175.00	2.9		180.00	2.9
- Saturday afternoon	280.00	285.00	1.8		290.00	1.8
- Sunday / Bank Holiday	380.00	385.00	1.3		390.00	1.3
Ceremony service enhancements						
- Friday	31.00	32.00	3.2		33.00	3.1
- Saturday morning	41.00	42.00	2.4		43.00	2.4
- Saturday afternoon	51.00	52.00	2.0		53.00	1.9
Pre-ceremony chat appointments for wedding/civil ceremonies in the Syrett Large Ceremony Room:						
- Monday - Friday	13.75	14.29	3.9	17.00	17.50	3.0
- Saturday morning	18.33	18.58	1.4	22.50	23.00	2.2
Attendance of Superintendent Registrar for a civil partnership conversion to a marriage at the Register office:						
- 10 December 2014-9 December 2015#	no charge					
- after 10 December 2015#	n/a	45.00	new		45.00	0.0
Attendance of Superintendent Registrar for a civil partnership conversion to a marriage at a registered building:						
- 10 December 2014-9 December 2015#	no charge					
- after 10 December 2015#	n/a	46.00	new		91.00	97.8
Application to convert a Civil Partnership to a marriage:						
- 10 December 2014-9 December 2015#	n/a	27.00	new		27.00	0.0
- after 10 December 2015#	n/a	27.00	new		27.00	0.0
Attendance of superintendent Registrar for a civil partnership conversion to a marriage with a non-statutory ceremony (<i>includes 1/2 hour pre-ceremony appointment</i>)						
- Syrett Large Ceremony Room 10 December 2014 - 9 December 2015#	197.50					
- Syrett Large Ceremony Room after 9 December 2015	n/a	242.50	new		245.00	1.0
- other licensed premises 10 December 2014 - 9 December 2015#	209.00					
- other licensed premises after 9 December 2015	n/a	254.00	new		258.00	1.6
Attendance of Superintendent Registrar for a civil partnership conversion to a marriage:						
- of a housebound person 10 December 2014 - 9 December 2015#	no charge					
- of a housebound person after 9 December 2015#	n/a	99.00	new		99.00	0.0
- of a detained person 10 December 2014 - 9 December 2015#	no charge					
- of a detained person after 9 December 2015#	n/a	117.00	new		117.00	0.0
- of a seriously ill person not expected to recover 10 December 2014 - 9 December 2015#	no charge					
- of a seriously ill person not expected to recover after 9 December 2015#	n/a	15.00	new		15.00	0.0
# These are statutory charges that are determined nationally through legislation. There is currently no indication that they might alter during 2015/16.						

CORPORATE SERVICES & CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT

2015/16 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase	Proposed Fee (Inc VAT)	2016/17 Proposed Fee (incl VAT where applicable)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%	£.p	£.p	%
Other Ceremonies and Nationality Checking Service						
Naming Ceremonies						
Attendance of celebrant at a naming ceremony in the Syrett Large Ceremony Room (includes 1/2 hour pre-ceremony appointment)						
- single naming ceremony	161.66	164.71	1.9	197.50	200.00	1.3
- double naming ceremony	201.25	204.83	1.8	246.00	250.00	1.6
- triple naming ceremony	226.95	231.15	1.8	277.50	282.00	1.6
Attendance of celebrant at a naming ceremony in licensed premises (includes 1/2 hour pre-ceremony appointment):						
- single naming ceremony	170.85	174.12	1.9	209.00	213.00	1.9
- double naming ceremony	209.52	213.30	1.8	256.00	260.50	1.8
- triple naming ceremony	244.36	248.98	1.9	299.00	304.50	1.8
Attendance of celebrant at a naming ceremony in non-licensed premises (includes 1/2 hour pre-ceremony appointment and non-refundable risk assessment fee)						
- single naming ceremony	n/a	216.67	new	260.00	265.00	1.9
- double naming ceremony	n/a	254.13	new	305.00	310.00	1.6
- triple naming ceremony	n/a	291.48	new	350.00	355.00	1.4
Other Ceremonies						
Attendance of celebrant at all other ceremonies (includes 1/2 hour pre-ceremony appointment)						
- Syrett Large Ceremony Room	161.66	164.71	1.9	197.50	200.00	1.3
- other licensed premises	170.85	174.12	1.9	209.00	213.00	1.9
- non licensed premises (includes a non-refundable risk assessment fee)	n/a	216.67	new	260.00	265.00	1.9
Certificates						
Birth (short and long), death and marriages certificates(extracts or full):						
- at time of registration#	4.00	4.00	0.0		n/a	
- after registration but in current register#	7.00	7.00	0.0		n/a	
- after registration and after register closed#	10.00	10.00	0.0		n/a	
Civil Partnership certificates (extract or full):						
- at time of registration#	4.00	4.00	0.0		n/a	
- at any other time#	10.00	10.00	0.0		n/a	
Nationality Checking Service						
Single adult application - Monday - Friday	47.50	48.33	1.7	58.00	59.00	1.7
Single adult application - Saturday	63.34	65.00	2.6	78.00	80.00	2.6
Single child application - Monday-Friday	17.50	19.17	9.5	23.00	24.00	4.3
Single child application - Saturday	26.67	27.50	3.1	33.00	34.00	3.0
Single adult and single child - Monday-Friday	57.50	62.50	8.7	75.00	80.00	6.7
Single adult and single child - Saturdays	72.50	78.75	8.6	94.50	96.00	1.6
Single adult and two children - Monday-Friday	63.34	79.17	25.0	95.00	100.00	5.3
Single adult and two children - Saturday	78.34	94.17	20.2	113.00	118.00	4.4
Single adult and three children - Monday-Friday	72.50	95.83	32.2	115.00	120.00	4.4
Single adult and three children - Saturday	88.34	108.33	22.6	130.00	135.00	3.8
Joint spouse application - Monday-Friday	67.50	83.33	23.5	100.00	105.00	5.0
Joint spouse application - Saturday	84.17	100.00	18.8	120.00	125.00	4.2
Joint spouse and up to two children - Monday-Friday	83.34	125.00	50.0	150.00	155.00	3.3
Joint spouse and up to two children -Saturday	98.34	137.50	39.8	165.00	170.00	3.0
Additional fee if a second appointment is required	n/a	16.67	new	20.00	21.00	5.0
Settlement Checking Service						
Single adult application - Monday-Friday	65.83	83.33	26.6	100.00	105.00	5.0
Single adult application and up to two children Monday-Friday	65.83	83.33	26.6	100.00	105.00	5.0
Each additional child - Monday-Friday	18.34	19.17	4.5	23.00	24.00	4.3
Additional fee if a second appointment is required	n/a	16.67	new	20.00	21.00	5.0
Individual Citizenship Ceremonies						
Superintendent Registrar's Room - Monday-Friday	58.34	60.00	2.8	72.00	74.00	2.8
Syrett Small Ceremony Room - Monday-Friday	n/a	104.17	new	125.00	130.00	4.0
Syrett Large Ceremony Room:						
- Monday - Friday	n/a	166.67	new	200.00	210.00	5.0
- Saturday	243.34	248.33	2.1	298.00	305.00	2.4
# These are statutory charges that are determined nationally through legislation. There is currently no indication that they might alter during 2015/16.						

CORPORATE SERVICES & CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT

2015/16 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service: Democratic Services

Purpose of the Charge: To Contribute to the costs of the service

	2014/15 Budget £'000	Proposed 2015/16 Budget £'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	0	0

Very few requests are made for agendas and therefore the income budget is less than £1,000.

Are concessions available? Agendas are available online at no charge.

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: Work with our communities and partners to be efficient, open, transparent and easy to access and to deliver value for money.

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase	Proposed Fee (Inc VAT)
	£.p	£.p	%	£.p

Council Publications

Agendas/Minutes, etc				
Council agenda – Charge per Annum (Based on 8 per Annum)	162.00	165.00	1.9	
Executive Agenda – Charge per Annum (based on 11 per Annum)	244.00	248.00	1.6	
Planning Committee (based on 12 per Annum)	244.00	248.00	1.6	
Any other Committee or Sub Committee Agendas				
Charge per Annum (Based on 4 per annum)	117.00	119.00	1.7	
Charge per single copy	29.00	30.00	3.4	
Part extract (any Committee) including background papers - administration fee plus....	11.00	11.00	0.0	
Photocopying Charges				
A4 B&W	0.24	0.25	4.2	0.30
A3 B&W	0.38	0.40	5.3	0.48
A4 Colour	0.78	0.79	1.8	0.95
A3 Colour	1.44	1.47	1.8	1.76

Service: Democratic Services

Purpose of the Charge: To Contribute to the costs of the service

	2014/15 Budget £'000	Proposed 2015/16 Budget £'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	2.0	2.0

Are concessions available? No

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: Work with our communities and partners to be efficient, open, transparent and easy to access and to deliver value for money.

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Appeals Service

Charges to schools for administration and clerking of appeals			
Up to 5 appeals and 2 ombudsman cases a year for three years	n/a	2,500.00	new
Up to 10 appeals and 2 ombudsmen cases a year for three years	n/a	4,700.00	new
Additional appeal once the maximum has been reached	n/a	250 each	new
Charge for unscheduled occasional appeals	n/a	250 each	new

CORPORATE SERVICES & CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT

2015/16 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service: Democratic Services

Purpose of the Charge: To Contribute to the costs of the service

	2014/15 Budget £'000	Proposed 2015/16 Budget £'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	2.0	2.0

Are concessions available? No

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: Work with our communities and partners to be efficient, open, transparent

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

STANDARD OTHER CHARGES

These are chargeable in addition or as default to recover actual costs for			
Invoice Charge	22.00	23.00	4.5
Hourly Rate	54.00	55.00	1.9
Minimum Charge	28.00	29.00	3.6

Service: Education Transport

Purpose of the Charge: To contribute to the costs of the service where there is spare capacity on an existing route.

	2014/15 Budget £'000	Proposed 2015/16 Budget £'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	0.1	0.1

Are concessions available? No

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: Work with our communities and partners to be efficient, open, transparent and easy to access and to deliver value for money.

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT)	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT)	Increase
	£.p	£.p	%

Home to School Travel			
<i>Farepayer fees per term on existing routes</i>			
Lost Passes	20.00	20.00	0.0

CORPORATE SERVICES & CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT

2015/16 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES

Service: Town Centre Management

Purpose of the Charge: To contribute to the costs of the service

	2014/15 Budget £'000	Proposed 2015/16 Budget £'000
Income the proposed fees will generate:	65	44

The 2014/15 budget relates to income received from the Indoor Market.

Are concessions available? Yes, charities and not for profit organisations can have the area without the charge for a maximum of 2 weeks per year, however cancellations with less than 48 hours notice will incur a charge of £5 per day. Local SME's may be charged a reduced rate, this degree of discretion is delegated to the Regeneration Manager.

Link to the Council's Medium Term Objectives: Work with our communities and partners to be efficient, open, transparent and easy to access and to deliver value for money.

Description	Current Fee (Exc VAT) £.p	Proposed Fee (Exc VAT) £.p	Increase %	Proposed Fee (Inc VAT) £.p
Stalls/promotions in the Charles Sq area Sun-Thurs daily charge		150.00	new	180.00
Stalls/promotions in the Charles Sq area Fri-Sat daily charge		300.00	new	360.00
Stalls/promotions in the Charles Sq area weekly charge		500.00	new	600.00
Fairground type ride daily		40.00	new	48.00
Fairground type ride weekly		200.00	new	240.00

**TO: THE EXECUTIVE
16 DECEMBER 2014**

**CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2015/2016 - 2017/2018
(Borough Treasurer/Chief Executive)**

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 Under the Council's constitution, the Executive is required to consult on its detailed budget proposals with the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Commission and any other interested parties or individuals for a period of at least six weeks. This report summarises the current position on the Council's Capital Programme budget preparations for 2015/16.
- 1.2 This report draws together each department's proposals so that the Executive can agree a draft capital programme for 2015/16-2017/18 as the basis for consultation. In compiling the draft programme the main focus is inevitably on determining the requirements for 2015/16, although future year's schemes do also form an important part of the programme.
- 1.3 The 2015/16 Capital Programme marks a step change in the Council's capital spending plans. The inclusion of significant capital projects such as the Town Centre redevelopment enabling works, the Binfield Learning Village at Blue Mountain and Coral Reef Transformation represent a substantial investment in the future of the Borough and all three projects will be a major feature of future year's capital programmes as well as in 2015/16.
- 1.4 The financial implications of the recommendations in this report are reflected in the subsequent report on the Council's draft revenue budget. Any revisions to the proposals put forward by each service would also need to be reflected in that report which will also be published as the basis for consultation following the Executive's meeting.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive:

- 2.1 **Approves, for consultation, an initial Council funded capital programme of £16.818m for 2015/16 as set out in paragraph 5.24 and summarised in Annex A, including the schemes listed in Annexes B – F.**
- 2.2 **To approve as a supplementary capital approval funding in 2014/15 of £0.447m for Binfield Learning Village at Blue Mountain, as outlined in the Funding Model agreed by Executive in October 2014.**
- 2.3 **Approves, for consultation, the inclusion of an additional budget of £1m for Invest to Save schemes.**
- 2.4 **Approves, for consultation, the inclusion of £1.880m of expenditure to be funded from S106 as outlined in paragraph 5.25.**
- 2.5 **Approves, for consultation, the inclusion of £17.804m of expenditure to be externally funded as outlined in paragraph 5.25.**

- 2.6 Approves the virements totalling £0.33m to the 2014/15 Children Young People and Learning Programme, as set out in Annex I, in order to meet the demands of the School Places Plan.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The reasons for the recommendations are set out in the report.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The alternative options are considered in the report.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Capital Resources

- 5.1 Each year the Council agrees a programme of capital schemes. In the past these schemes have been funded from three main sources:
- the Council's accumulated capital receipts
 - Government Grants
 - other external contributions
- 5.2 The Local Government Act 2003 brought in radical changes to the financing of capital expenditure and from that date, the Government no longer issued borrowing approvals. Instead, under a new "prudential framework", Councils can set their own borrowing limits based on the affordability of the debt.
- 5.3 As the Council's accumulated capital receipts have been fully utilised, the Council returned to a position of internal borrowing in 2010 and as such a revenue contribution is required each year to repay this internal borrowing. Once the Council's current level of investments is exhausted, which is expected to be within 2016, the Council will need to borrow externally.
- 5.4 The Council's estimated total usable capital receipts at 31st March 2014 are zero. As a debt free authority the Council is partly reliant on capital receipts to fund its capital programme, although interest generated from capital receipts can also help support the revenue budget in the short term. The Council still receives a share of any Right-To-Buy proceeds from Bracknell Forest Homes in addition to a share of capital receipts from the VAT Shelter scheme.
- 5.5 The proposed capital programme for 2015/16 has been developed, therefore, on the assumption that it will be funded by a combination of Government grants, other external contributions and some internal borrowing in addition to the £2.5m of capital receipts. The financing costs associated with the General Fund Capital Programme have been provided for in the Council's revenue budget plans which also appear on tonight's agenda.
- #### **New Schemes**
- 5.6 Within the general financial framework outlined above, Service Departments have considered new schemes for inclusion within the Council's Capital Programme for 2015/16 – 2017/18. Given that both capital and revenue resources are under pressure, each Department has evaluated and prioritised proposed schemes into

the broad categories, set out in the Council's Corporate Capital Strategy and in line with the Council's Asset Management Plan. Having done this, only the very highest priority schemes and programmes are being recommended for inclusion in the Capital Programme.

- 5.7 Within this framework however, the proposed programme does include three significant items, each of which represents a major investment in the future of the Borough in its own right. These relate to the imminent regeneration of the Bracknell town centre, the creation of the new Binfield Learning Village at Blue Mountain and the maintenance and enhancement at the Corel Reef leisure pool.

Town Centre Redevelopment Works

- 5.8 Now that the stage has almost been reached when the Development Agreement with Bracknell Regeneration Partnership (BRP) will become unconditional, the Council will need to undertake its own planned investment on wider Town Centre infrastructure. In order to facilitate the Town Centre redevelopment works it is proposed that the Council should invest up to £12.4m (excluding Stamp Duty which may become payable depending on the nature of the transactions) over the period 2014/15 to 2017/18. This will include the purchase of the Bracknell Town Centre Bus Station alongside investment in a new replacement Park and further public realm and highway works. Further details of the expenditure can be found on a separate Report on tonight's Agenda. The expenditure is shown as committed on the draft capital programme on the assumption that Full Council will approve the expenditure at its January meeting.

- 5.9 All of these items have a much wider impact than the new development itself and will benefit the whole Borough. However the expenditure needs to be co-ordinated with the specific work that BRP are planning to carry out.

Town Centre Infrastructure Works

- 5.10 Similarly in order to facilitate transport movements around the Borough, including the planned Town Centre redevelopment, it is necessary to continue to fund a number of infrastructure schemes. As such a funding need of £2.0m has been identified in the 2015/16 proposals with further commitments required in future years to ensure that the regenerated town centre functions as a "whole centre" and not just as an isolated shopping outlet. As such spending levels of around £2m per annum are likely to be required until the new Northern Retail Quarter area is open for trading. This additional expenditure is aimed at maximising the positive experience of visiting the regenerated town centre.

Binfield Learning Village at Blue Mountain

- 5.11 The Binfield Learning Village at Blue Mountain is a priority for the Council. The programme will deliver statutory places required in the Borough alongside meeting the need for new housing and the associated community facilities. Based on the most recent feasibility study the total cost of the Learning Village, if commenced now, is £39.07m plus £3m contingency costs. As per the current programme the building works will start in January 2016 and as such costs are likely to increase between now and then due to inflation. As the programme progresses and further milestones are met the impact of inflation will be reported and budget approvals updated. The Executive agreed the Funding Model in October 2014 and as such the approvals for 2014/15 through to 2017/18 are sought in this report.

Coral Reef Transformation

- 5.12 The main roof structures at Coral Reef are complex and have required extensive monitoring and maintenance for the latter part of its life. At 25 years old they are reaching the end of their practical lifespan and need to be replaced in a planned

way. While the major issue lies with the main roof over the pool hall, all other roofs are of the same construction and in due course will need to be replaced too. In addition a number of options, including two additional flumes and a new flume tower, to improve the leisure offer are being proposed alongside a significant refurbishment of the building to enhance the Borough's "signature" leisure offer. A separate, more detailed report, will be considered by the Executive on tonight's agenda outlining the project and identifying the revenue impact of the scheme. The overall capital cost of the scheme is estimated to be £11.229m and this is included in the draft Capital Programme.

Other Unavoidable & Committed schemes

- 5.13 This category covers schemes which must proceed to ensure that the Council is not left open to legal sanction and includes items relating to health and safety issues, new legislation etc. Committed schemes also include those that have been started as part of the 2014/15 Capital Programme. Also included within this category are those schemes that were previously funded from the General Fund Revenue Account, but which by their nature could be legitimately capitalised, thereby reducing pressure on the revenue budget. Schemes in this category form the first call on the available capital resources.
- 5.14 Within these categories, provision has been made to address the rolling programme of disabled access requirements to Council buildings (£0.1m). The works have been identified through independent access audits and have been prioritised to meet the needs of users of these buildings. Significant progress has been made in past years and a programme of works has been planned across a range of service areas and is outlined in Annex G.

Maintenance (Improvements and capitalised repairs)

- 5.15 An assessment has been made of the condition of the Council's property assets to arrive at an estimate of the outstanding maintenance works required. An assessment is made of the state of each building element and its repair priority with a condition rating and repair urgency as follows.

Definition of Condition Categories:	
A:	Good – Performing as intended and operating efficiently.
B:	Satisfactory – Performing as intended but showing minor deterioration.
C:	Poor – Showing major defects and/or not operating as intended.
D:	Bad – Life expired and/or serious risk of imminent failure.
Priority:	
1	Urgent works that will prevent immediate closure of premises and/or address an immediate high risk to the health and safety of the occupants and/or remedy a serious breach of legislation.
2	Essential work required within two years that will prevent serious deterioration of the fabric or services and/or address a medium risk to the health & safety of the occupants and/or a minor breach of the legislation.
3	Desirable work required within 3 to 5 years that will prevent deterioration of the fabric or services and/or address a low risk to the health & safety of the occupants and/or a minor breach of the legislation.
4	Long-term work required beyond a period of 5 years that will prevent deterioration of the fabric or services.

- 5.16 The figures below are based on the information held in the Construction and Maintenance Groups' property management system. They have been adjusted to exclude those works that are already budgeted for within existing 2014/15 schools and corporate planned maintenance programmes.

The priorities can be broken down as follows:

Maintenance Backlog

		£ (000)	£ (000)
Schools	Priority 1C & 1D	2,204	
	Priority 2C & 2D	2,276	
	Lower Priorities	11,639	16,119
Corporate Properties	Priority 1C & 1D	1,235	
	Priority 2C & 2D	2,497	
	Lower Priorities	5,420	9,152
Total			25,271

- 5.17 The overall maintenance liability has reduced from £40.1m in 2011/12 to £25.3m and reflects the investment that the Council has made in its property asset base and a number of disposals.

Schools

- 5.18 Historically the Schools Maintenance Programme has been funded from the Capital Maintenance grant allocation from the Department for Education. The allocations from the DfE are expected on or after the publication of the Provisional Settlement and will be used to tackle the highest priority items identified in the condition surveys indicated above.

Non-schools

- 5.19 From an initial analysis of the work required it is clear that some works, whilst urgent, cannot be legitimately capitalised and must be met from a revenue budget. An allowance of £200,000 is available in the 2015/16 Revenue Budget proposals to meet these liabilities. In line with the policy adopted last year the Asset Management Group has considered only those works that fall within categories 1C and 1D. Given the financial constraints on both the revenue and capital budgets an allocation of £1.235m is recommended to address the most pressing 1C & 1D priorities.
- 5.20 The implications of failing to maintain Council buildings and to address the backlog will be a significant issue for the Council over the coming years and efforts will be focussed on ensuring that the highest priority items are tackled first, that efficiencies are maximised in the procurement of works and that maintenance which will result in energy efficiencies are undertaken through the invest-to-save programme.

Rolling programmes

- 5.21 These programmes cover more than one year and give a degree of certainty for forward planning schemes to improve service delivery. They make an important contribution towards the Council's Medium Term Objectives and established Asset Management Plans.

Other Desirable Schemes

- 5.22 In addition to the schemes identified in the above categories, each service has requested funding for other high priority schemes that meet the needs and objectives of their service and the Council's Medium Term Objectives. The net cost of schemes which attract partial external funding are included in the schemes put forward.

Invest To Save Schemes

- 5.23 These are schemes where the additional revenue income or savings arising from their implementation exceeds the internal borrowing costs. The Council's approach to Invest to Save schemes is included in its Capital Strategy and in accordance with the Capital Strategy it is proposed that a further £1m be included in the 2015/16 capital programme for potential Invest to Save schemes.

Capital Programme 2015/16 – 2017/18

- 5.24 A detailed list of suggested schemes within the draft capital programme, together with a brief description of each project, for each service is included in Annexes B – F. For reasons of commercial confidentiality the proposed IT schemes are detailed in Annex H (Restricted). A summary of the cost of schemes proposed by Departments is set out in the table below and in Annex A. Total Council funding amounts to £16.818m. However excluding the funding for Binfield Learning Village at Blue Mountain, Coral Reef Transformation and the Town Centre Redevelopment the total Council funding requested is £8.312m in 2015/16 and this is in line with recent years programmes.

Capital Programme 2015/16-2017/18				
Annex	Service Area	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000	2017/18 £000
B	Adult Social Care, Health & Housing	2,383	0	0
C	Children, Young People & Learning	10,930	31,598	14,221
D	Corporate Services	50	0	0
E	Council Wide	7,407	5,580	3,901
F	Environment Culture & Communities	13,852	15,036	8,752
	Total Capital Programme	34,622	52,214	26,874
	Externally Funded	17,804	11,803	8,876
	Total request for Council funding	16,818	40,411	17,998

Externally Funded Schemes

- 5.25 A number of external funding sources are also available to fund schemes within the capital programme. External support has been identified from three main sources:

Government Grants

A number of capital schemes attract specific grants. It is proposed that all such schemes should be included in the capital programme at the level of external funding that is available.

A significant element of the grant-funded capital programme relates to the planned investment in Schools. The schools investment programme included in this report reflects the highest priority schemes identified by the Department. However it is not expected that the two main Department for Education grants (Basic Need and Schools Maintenance) will be sufficient to finance all these schemes. The final grant allocations are unknown at this stage; however the 2015/16 Basic Need block has been announced as part of a 2-year settlement in 2014/15 and is expected to be £3.477m. Historically the Schools Maintenance Grant has been approximately £1.8m. As such a total of £5.277m is anticipated at this stage. Excluding Binfield Learning Village at Blue Mountain, the total identified need for Schools is £7.43m, leaving a gap of approximately £2.2m. At this stage the Department will continue to review and reprioritise the schemes with the aim of bringing the total scheme costs in line with the anticipated external grant allocations.

A second key constituent of capital grant funding relates to the Highway Maintenance and Integrated Transport Block. Grant approvals of £2.37m are currently anticipated for 2015/16.

Section 106 (£1.880m)

Each year the Council enters into a number of agreements under Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 by which developers make a contribution towards the cost of providing facilities and infrastructure that may be required as a result of their development. Usually the monies are given for work in a particular area and/or for specific projects. The total money available at present, which is not financially committed to specific projects, is £4.2m, although conditions restricting its use will apply to almost all of this.

Officers have identified a number of schemes that could be funded from Section 106 funds in 2015/16, where funding becomes available. These are summarised below

Department	Schemes	Budget
		<i>£000</i>
ASCHH	Affordable Housing	777
Corporate Services	Community Centre & Library	393
ECC	Leisure & Culture	110
ECC	Local Transport Plan	600
	Total	1,880

The level of new funding available through Section 106 is expected to reduce in the future following the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). However the more flexible CIL funding should offset this reduction.

Local Growth Fund (£5.6m in 15/16 and a further £1.4m in 2017/18)

Working with the Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), the Council was successful in bidding to include various Infrastructure improvement schemes as part the Thames Valley Strategic Economic plan and was awarded £7m. This funding was awarded as part of the Local Growth Fund which is aimed creating economic growth such as unlocking housing and commercial development. The funding breakdown includes £2.1m for Coral Reef Junction (Anticipated spend 2015/16), £3.5m towards Warfield link road (Anticipated spend 2015/16), and £1.4m

towards improvements to Martins Heron Junction and London Rd (Anticipated spend 2017/18).

On-going Revenue Costs

- 5.26 Schemes may have associated on-going revenue costs and tend to become payable in the year after implementation. As such will be included within the Council's Commitment Budget for 2016/17. These total £6,000 and relate to the Network Refresh programme.

Funding Options

- 5.27 Following the transfer of the housing stock in 2008, the Council's capital receipts are limited to miscellaneous asset sales and the contribution from the VAT Shelter Scheme and Right-to-Buy claw back agreed as part of the transfer. As noted earlier in this report, these receipts are estimated to be in the region of £2.5m.
- 5.28 The proposed capital programme for 2015/16 has been developed, therefore, on the assumption that it will be funded by a combination of £2.5m of capital receipts, Government grants, other external contributions and some internal borrowing. The financing costs associated with the Capital Programme have been provided for in the Council's revenue budget plans.
- 5.29 Should any additional capital receipts be generated in 2015/16 the interest earned on these will be used to mitigate the revenue cost of the capital programme.
- 5.30 For 2015/16 it is unlikely that the Council will need to resort to external borrowing as it will be able to utilise resources held internally, however there remains the possibility given the substantial investment proposed in the Town Centre, Coral Reef and the Binfield Learning Village at Blue Mountain that short term borrowing for cash-flow purposes may be required in this year. Given the investment proposed in 2016/17 for these schemes it is inevitable that the Council will be required to borrow externally and may decide, from a treasury management standpoint, to borrow earlier in the cycle.
- 5.31 However the Capital Finance regulations require the General Fund to set aside an amount which would be broadly equivalent to the amount the Council would need to pay if it borrowed externally. If any amendments are made to the capital programme, the revenue consequences will need to be adjusted accordingly. Executive Members will therefore need to consider the impact of the capital programme as part of the final revenue budget decisions.
- 5.32 The reduction in available capital receipts has placed greater emphasis on the capital programme and its impact on the revenue budget. Following the introduction of the Prudential Borrowing regime local authorities are able to determine the level of their own capital expenditure with regard only to affordability on the revenue account. In practice this represents the amount of borrowing they can afford to finance, and will necessitate taking a medium-term view of revenue income streams and capital investment needs.
- 5.33 To achieve its aim of ensuring that capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable, the Local Government Act requires all local authorities to set and keep under review a series of prudential indicators included in the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. The Capital Programme recommended in this report can be sustained and is within the prudential guidelines. Full Council will need to agree the prudential indicators for 2015/16 to 2017/18 in February 2015, alongside its consideration of the specific budget proposals for 2015/16 and the Council's medium-term financial prospects.

- 5.34 Members will need to carefully balance the level of the Capital Programme in future years against other revenue budget pressures and a thorough review, including the prioritisation of those schemes planned for 2016/17 onwards, will need to be undertaken during next summer.

Virements in 2014/15 CYPL Capital Programme

- 5.35 To ensure that the Council is able to provide sufficient school places if required, advance design for new schemes is required now and approval is sought for a number of schemes, where further funding is requested in 2015/16, to be added to the 2014/15 Capital Programme. These virements amount to £190,000. In addition to this it has been deemed essential to undertake internal remodelling to Wooden Hill Primary School to alleviate unacceptable noise levels resulting from it being the last primary school in the Borough to have open plan classrooms. Taken together these virements exceed the delegated limit of £250,000, and as such require Council approval. More detail on each of the schemes is contained in Annex I

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The authorisation for incurring capital expenditure by local authorities is contained in the legislation covering the service areas. Controls on capital expenditure are contained in the Local Government Act 2003 and regulations made thereunder.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The financial implications are contained within the report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 The Council's final budget proposals will potentially impact on all areas of the community. A detailed consultation process is planned in order to provide individuals and groups with the opportunity to comment on the draft proposals. This will ensure that in making final recommendations, the Executive can be made aware of the views of a broad section of residents and service users. Where necessary, impact assessments on specific schemes within the capital programme will be undertaken before work commences.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 The most significant risk facing the Council is the impact of the capital programme on the revenue budget. The scale of the Council's Capital Programme for 2015/16 will impact upon the revenue budget and will itself be subject to consultation over the coming weeks. All new spending on services will need to be funded from new capital receipts or borrowing from internal resources. This effect is compounded by future year's capital programmes. As revenue resources are limited it is clear that a capital programme of this magnitude is not sustainable in the medium term without significant revenue economies. The generation of capital receipts in future years may mitigate the impact on the revenue budget, but as the timing and scale of these receipts is uncertain their impact is unlikely to be significant.
- 6.5 There are also a range of risks that are common to all capital projects which include:
- Tender prices exceeding the budget
 - Planning issues and potential delays
 - Uncertainty of external funding
 - Building delays due to unavailability of materials or inclement weather
 - Availability of staff with appropriate skills to implement schemes

6.6 These can be managed through the use of appropriate professional officers and following best practice in project management techniques. The report also identifies the risk associated with the shortfall in maintenance expenditure compared to that identified by the latest condition surveys. With only those highest priorities receiving funding in 2015/16, there will be a further build up in the maintenance backlog and a risk that the deterioration in Council assets will hamper the ability to deliver good services.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Commission will be consulted on the budget proposals and may also choose to direct specific issues to individual overview and scrutiny panels. Targeted consultation exercises will be undertaken with business rate payers, the Schools Forum, town and parish councils and voluntary organisations. Comments and views will be sought on both the overall budget package and on the detailed budget proposals. In addition, this report and all the supporting information are publicly available to any individual or group who wish to comment on any proposal included within it. To facilitate this, the full budget package will be placed on the Council's web site at <http://consult.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/portal>. There will also be a dedicated mailbox to collect comments.

7.2 The timetable for the approval of the 2015/16 Budget is as follows

Executive agree proposals as basis for consultation	16 December 2014
Consultation period	17 December 2014 - 27 January 2015
Executive considers representations made and recommends budget.	10 February 2015
Council considers Executive budget proposals	25 February 2015

Background Papers

None

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CAPITAL PROGRAMME - BY CATEGORY

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	TOTAL
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Committed	2,119	853	853	3,825
Unavoidable	1,193	920	831	2,944
Town Centre Highway Works	2,000	2,000	2,000	6,000
Maintenance	1,740	1,670	1,740	5,150
Rolling Programme / Other Desirable	1,260	10	0	1,270
Total Request for Council Funding	8,312	5,453	5,424	19,189
Total External Funding	17,804	11,803	8,876	38,483
Major Capital Projects*				
Binfield Learning Village at Blue Mountain	3,349	23,300	10,300	36,949
Town Centre Regeneration	3,600	3,300	1,700	8,600
Coral Reef Transformation	1,557	8,358	574	10,489
Total Capital Funding	34,622	52,214	26,874	113,710

* These projects extend over more than the three financial years included in the draft capital programme. The full cost of each is as follows

	£m
Binfield Learning Village at Blue Mountain	39.1
Town Centre Regeneration	12.4
Coral Reef Transformation	11.2

CAPITAL PROGRAMME - CORPORATE SERVICES / CHIEF EXECUTIVE

	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000	2017/18 £000
Committed			
Replacement HR and Payroll System	50	0	0
	50	0	0
Unavoidable			
	0	0	0
	0	0	0
Maintenance			
See Council Wide	0	0	0
	0	0	0
Rolling Programme / Other Desirable			
	0	0	0
	0	0	0
TOTAL REQUEST FOR COUNCIL FUNDING	50	0	0
External Funding			
TOTAL EXTERNAL FUNDING	0	0	0
TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME	50	0	0

Corporate Wide Schemes

Replacement HR and Payroll System	£50,000
Second year funding of funds committed in 2014/15 for the HR and Payroll Systems replacement project.	

CAPITAL PROGRAMME - COUNCIL WIDE

	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000	2017/18 £000
Town Centre Redevelopment - Committed			
Town Centre Redevelopment	3,500	3,300	1,400
Town Centre Redevelopment - Stamp Duty	100	0	300
	3,600	3,300	1,700
Committed			
Capitalisation of buildings, highways and ITC project management included in revenue budget proposals	400	400	400
MFD - Printer Refresh	20	0	0
Superfast Broadband Match Funding	20	0	0
	440	400	400
Unavoidable			
Access Improvement Programme (Equalities Act)	100	100	100
Asbestos Control	30	0	0
IT Schemes - Unavoidable	631	470	331
	761	570	431
Maintenance			
Improvements & Capitalised Repairs	1,235	1,300	1,370
	1,235	1,300	1,370
Rolling Programme / Other Desirable			
Harmans Water Community Centre & Library	750	0	0
IT Schemes - Desirable	95	10	0
	845	10	0
TOTAL REQUEST FOR COUNCIL FUNDING	6,881	5,580	3,901
External Funding			
Harmans Water Community Centre & Library - ITS	133	0	0
Harmans Water Community Centre & Library - S106	393	0	0
TOTAL EXTERNAL FUNDING	526	0	0
TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME	7,407	5,580	3,901

Council Wide Schemes

Capitalisation of buildings, highways and ITC project management	£400,000
Each year the Council undertakes significant initiatives that will deliver efficiencies to the services it currently provides either through one-off projects such as delivering IT solutions, or enhancement to assets such as highway infrastructure. This budget enables a proportion of these schemes and the project management thereof to be capitalised and not funded through the revenue account.	
Multi Functional Device Refresh & Desktop Printer Refresh and print management	£20,000
Current MFD estate (August 2014) has over 90 Ricoh & 10 Konica MFDs. A number of the Ricoh MFDs & specialist printers are now over 6 years old and there has been an additional requirement for more colour MFD's at remote sites including Leisure centres and libraries. Models under the current new framework are cheaper than many of the existing 6 year old printers with an average saving of 40% per click.	
Superfast Broadband Match Funding	£20,000
Continuation of the programme.	
Access Improvement Programme	£100,000
Works have been identified through independent access audits and have been prioritised to meet the needs of users of these buildings. Significant progress has been made in past years and a programme of works has been planned across a range of service areas.	
Asbestos Control	£30,000
A budget is required to cover any asbestos removal or encapsulating works in Corporate properties that is identified in future Asbestos Management Surveys. The surveys will be phased over a number of years. In April 2012 the Control of Asbestos Regulations (CAR) 2006 were amended resulting in changes to the licensing category of certain types of Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs).	
ICT Schemes - Unavoidable	£631,000
See Annex H	
Maintenance – Improvements & Capitalised Repairs	£1,235,000
See paragraph of the main report	
Harmans Water Community Centre & Library	£750,000
To provide a viable and sustainable use for the first floor accommodation of the centre which will result in essential repair works being carried out to ensure that the fabric of the structure for the building does not deteriorate further. Also To provide library and community facilities at the neighbourhood centre in a cost effective way.	
ICT Schemes - Desirable	£95,000
See Annex H	

Publically Accessible Buildings

Annex G

The percentage of Council owned and managed buildings that are open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for and accessible to disabled people.

Excludes public conveniences, schools and other educational establishments.

	Property	Accessible?	Improvement Programme	Last Audited	Audit Company	Outturn (%)
1	Sandhurst Youth Centre (The Spot)	Yes		Apr-07	Pemberton Assoc.	2.7
2	Binfield Library	Yes		Feb-02	Wrightson O'Brien Ltd	5.4
3	Birch Hill Library	Yes		Feb-02	Wrightson O'Brien Ltd	8.1
4	Cem & Crem	Yes		Feb-02	Pemberton Assoc.	10.8
5	Crowthorne Library	Yes		New building		13.5
6	Easthampstead & Wildridings Community	Yes		Feb-02	Wrightson O'Brien Ltd	16.2
7	Easthampstead House	Yes		Apr-01	Pemberton Assoc.	18.9
8	Harmans Water Swimming Pool	Yes		Feb-02	Pemberton Assoc.	21.6
9	Time Square	Yes		Feb-02	Wrightson O'Brien Ltd	24.3
10	Whitegrove Library	Yes		Feb-02	Wrightson O'Brien Ltd	27.0
11	Harmans Water Library	Yes	2007/08	Apr-01	Pemberton Assoc.	29.7
12	The Look Out	Yes	2007/08	Apr-01	Pemberton Assoc.	32.4
13	Edgbarrow Sports Centre	Yes	2007/08	Apr-01	Pemberton Assoc.	35.1
14	Great Hollands Community Centre	Yes	2007/08	Feb-02	Pemberton Assoc.	37.8
15	Martins Heron Community Centre	Yes	2007/08	May-07	Andrews Partnership	40.5
16	Owlsmoor Community Centre	Yes	2007/08	Apr-07	Pemberton Assoc.	43.2
17	Priestwood Community Centre	Yes	2007/08	May-07	Andrews Partnership	45.9
18	Sandhurst Sports Centre	Yes	2007/08	Apr-01	Pemberton Assoc.	48.6
19	Forest Park Community Centre	Yes	2008/09	Feb-02	Pemberton Assoc.	51.4
20	Horseshoe Lake Sailing Centre	Yes	2008/09	Feb-02	Pemberton Assoc.	54.1
21	Pines Community Centre	Yes	2008/09	May-07	Andrews Partnership	56.8
22	Birch Hill Community Centre	Yes	2008/09	Jun-07	Pemberton Assoc.	59.5
23	Easthampstead Park Conference Centre	Yes	2009/10	Feb-04	T.B.A.	62.2
24	Downshire Golf Club	Yes	2009/10	Jun-08	Andrews Partnership	64.9
25	Coral Reef	Yes	2009/10	Feb-02	Pemberton Assoc.	67.6
26	Bullbrook Community Centre	Yes	2009/10	Feb-02	Wrightson O'Brien Ltd	70.3
27	Farley Wood Community Centre	Yes	2010/11	Feb-02	Wrightson O'Brien Ltd	73.0
28	The Zone Youth Centre	Yes	2010	New building		75.7
29	Jennetts Park Community Centre	Yes	2011	New building		78.4
30	Crown Wood Community Centre	Yes	2012/13	Feb-02	Wrightson O'Brien Ltd	81.1
31	Bracknell Library	Yes	2012/13	Apr-01	Pemberton Assoc.	83.8
32	Sandhurst Library	Yes	2012/13	Feb-02	Pemberton Assoc.	86.5
33	Great Hollands Library	Yes	2014/15	Feb-02	Pemberton Assoc.	89.2
34	Bracknell Sports & Leisure Centre	No	2013/14	Mar-07	Pemberton Assoc.	91.9
35	North Ascot Library	No	TBC	Feb-02	Wrightson O'Brien Ltd	94.6
36	Car park 2 - Charles Square	No		Added 2013		97.3
37	Car park 4 - High Street	No		Added 2013		100.0

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
29 JANUARY 2015**

REVIEW OF BUSINESS RATES AND DISCRETIONARY RELIEF

Assistant Chief Executive

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents the attached report resulting from the review of Business Rates and discretionary relief undertaken by a working group of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

- 2.1 **Adopts the attached report of the review of Business Rates and discretionary relief undertaken by a working group of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, for sending formally to the Leader of the Council.**
- 2.2 **Stands down the working group.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION/ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS/ EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT/ STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES / OTHER OFFICERS/ CONSULTATION – Not applicable

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A Review of Business Rates and Discretionary Relief

by a Working Group of
the Overview and Scrutiny Commission



January 2015

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Acknowledgements

The Working Group would like to express its thanks and appreciation to the following people we met for their co-operation and time. All those who have participated in the review have been thanked for their contribution and received a copy of this report if wished.

Paul Briggs	Chief Executive, Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce
Matthew Harrington	Commercial Director, Oxford Innovation Ltd
David Knowles Leak	Regional Chairman, Thames Valley Federation of Small Businesses

London Borough Of Croydon

Councillor Toni Letts	Cabinet Member for Economic Development
Councillor Wayne Lawlor	
Lisa McCance	Head of Economic Development
Jivko Hristov	Economic Strategy Manager
Ose Akpom	Senior Project Officer

Bracknell Forest Council

Councillor Brunel-Walker	Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration
Councillor McCracken	Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection
Councillor Ward	Executive Member for Transformation and Finance
Alison Sanders	Director of Corporate Services
Bobby Mulheir	Chief Officer, Customer Services
Victor Nicholls	Assistant Chief Executive

Alan Nash
Richard Beaumont
Robert Jolley
Sarah Kingston

Borough Treasurer
Head of Overview and Scrutiny
Team Manager, Business and Enterprise Service
Revenue Services Manager

1. Foreword by the Lead Member

- 1.1 I hope that you will find this an interesting document to read. It has certainly been an interesting review to be involved with. It has taken eight months to come to the conclusions and recommendations offered in the report.
- 1.2 There have been many people and organisations involved. I would like to record my thanks to them all for the time, effort and enthusiasm with which they have approached the subject.
- 1.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission Councillors started in May 2014 to look at gaining an in depth understanding of existing Business Rates and avoidance schemes; to scrutinise the Council's performance in collecting the rates coupled with appeal cases; finally to explore how the Council can be innovative and support economic development by helping to reduce unoccupied buildings.
- 1.4 The report succeeds in achieving the working group's objectives. On behalf of my fellow members I do hope that the recommendations can be agreed with and become a small assistance to a big problem.
- 1.5 Although the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement was not party to our group, he clearly received a leak of what we were thinking by including the subject in his announcements on 3rd December 2014.

Councillor Robert Angell
Lead Member

2. Executive Summary

2.1 This report summarises the review by an Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Working Group (the Group) of Business Rates (BR) in Bracknell Forest, which took place between May and November 2014

2.2 The report is organised in the following sections:

- Part 3 Gives background information in respect of Business Rates, and summarises how we set about our review.
- Part 4 Summarises the information and evidence gathered by the Working Group.
- Part 5 Contains the conclusions we have reached following our review, on which we have based a number of recommendations to the Council's Executive.

At the end of our report is a glossary of terms used and appendices containing detailed supporting information.

2.3 Our overall conclusions are that:

- a) The Council is performing very well in its collection of Business Rates;
- b) There is a growing problem nationally of BR avoidance schemes, which is beyond the Council's control, and which is serving to significantly reduce BR income for this Council and others;
- c) There is a strong case to introduce a discretionary BR relief scheme, which we are confident will give enhanced income in the longer term, and which will directly help to develop our local economy. To be effective, it is essential that this forms part of a wider package of support to business, and that it is delivered in partnership with other organisations.

2.4 Our recommendations to the Executive are in section 5 of this report:

5.4 Efforts are made to ascertain the rate of take up of Small Business Rates relief in Bracknell Forest, and if similarly low to the national average, to publicise the availability of this valuable relief scheme more widely.

5.8 The Executive looks for opportunities – perhaps through the Local Government Association, and possibly directly to Government Ministers – to stress to central government the significance of Business Rates avoidance, and the need for early resolution.

5.11 The draft discretionary Business Rates relief scheme at Appendix 2, along with further considerations and details at Appendix 3, are put forward by the Executive for consideration as part of the forthcoming 2015-16 budget proposals to Council.

5.12 The Executive Members for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection; and Economic Development and Regeneration should ensure there is effective promotion of the proposed discretionary BR scheme.

2.5 Members of the Working Group hope that this report will be well received and we look forward to receiving responses to its recommendations.

2.6 The Working Group comprised:

Councillor Angell (Lead Member)
Councillor Heydon
Councillor Leake
Councillor Virgo

3. Background

The National Context For Business Rates

- 3.1 Business Rates (BR) are a property tax paid by occupants of non-domestic properties. The basic rates bill of a property (a 'hereditament') is determined by multiplying its rateable value by the 'multiplier'. In England, a property's rateable value is set by the Valuation Office Agency at regular intervals (the next revaluation is due in 2017). The rateable value broadly represents the yearly rent the property could have been let for on the open market on a particular date, last set at 1 April 2008. The valuation officer may alter the value if circumstances change. There are two multipliers: the standard non-domestic rating multiplier and the small business non-domestic rating multiplier. The multipliers are set by central government and expressed in pence per pound of rateable value. Between revaluations, the multipliers change each year in line with inflation and to take account of the cost of small business rate relief.
- 3.2 In England, district and unitary councils ('billing authorities') collect BR: In England, the rates are partly pooled at central government level and redistributed on a needs basis, and retained in part by billing authorities. In the Council's case, from 1 April 2013, Central Government take a 50% share, the Council takes 49%, and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority take 1%. This is further complicated, in that the Government sets a baseline 'tariff' (to be reviewed in 2020); if the Council's BR income exceeds that baseline tariff, 42% of the 'excess' BR income is paid over to the Government. Conversely, if the Council's BR income falls short of the baseline a 'top up' is received from Central Government – this has never occurred in Bracknell Forest's case.
- 3.3 Various reliefs are available from full business rates liability, both mandatory (set in legislation) and at the discretion of billing authorities. These include small business rate relief; mandatory relief for charities; and relief for small shops, pubs and petrol stations in rural settlements. These reliefs do not affect the rateable value of the property, and the business rates due may change if occupancy changes. Property that is empty only attracts relief for a short period of time after it becomes empty: it is then subject to the full business rate. A number of BR avoidance schemes are operating in that respect. Councils have no involvement in setting the base charge nor any discretion over the mandatory reliefs and exemptions.
- 3.4 The Group was informed that the government was likely to extend the enhanced small business rate relief scheme from its current end-date of March 2015, but this was not certain.
- 3.5 The 'localisation' of BR on 1 April 2013 did not change the levels of Mandatory and Discretionary relief available however all costs were henceforth shared with Central Government on a 50/50 basis. Section 69 of the Localism Act 2011 provided a new discretionary power for billing authorities in England and Wales to reduce the business rates of any local ratepayer. The new power to grant discounts gives billing authorities complete discretion allowing them to give no discounts at all, through to the extreme of providing a 100% BR relief to all businesses. The new power applied from 1 April 2012. Councils do have to ensure that the reliefs they allow do not transgress state aid rules.
- 3.6 Any discretionary relief/'discounts' are provided wholly at the council's expense as opposed to all other reliefs where the cost is shared on a 50/50 basis with Central Government. The Government's objective for discretionary BR relief/discounts is to

provide greater opportunity for local authorities to use innovative approaches in delivering a wide range of policy objectives through use of this new power. The policy aim is that through lowering the tax burden on local business there will be greater cash available for more investment, retained or higher employment which in turn will deliver improved economic performance. It would also help to reduce the scope for BR avoidance schemes; this is an important issue which we return to in paragraph 5.10 and Appendix 2 below.

- 3.7 The new powers available under the Localism Act allow council scope to determine their own scheme of discretionary relief to match their priorities. A common theme among the schemes which have been introduced thus far is to use BR discretionary relief to support the regeneration of town centres. At this relatively early stage, the majority of councils have not made use of the new discretionary relief powers, and evidence of outcomes nationally was unclear.

The Bracknell Forest Context

- 3.8 Bracknell Forest currently has some 2,400 business premises on which business rates are charged. Business Rates are a very major source of income to the Council (£74 million was collected in 2013/14), funding the delivery of many vital public services. In 2014/15 mandatory reliefs and exemptions totalled some £5 million, and discretionary reliefs amounted to some £150,000. There is a quarterly report to the Executive (published on the Council's website) seeking Executive Member approval to discretionary BR reliefs. The Revenue Services team in the Council's Customer Services division collect BR, also collect Council Tax, and it operates the cashiers function for the whole Council.
- 3.9 The practical consequence of the Government's baseline mechanism (see paragraph 3.2 above) for the Council was that it received only 30% of the substantial additional BR paid by a major telecommunication company in 2014/15. The Government has said the formula baseline is due to be reviewed next in 2020. Consequently, in the event the Council's BR base was lower in the run –up to 2020 (for example by granting discretionary BR reliefs), that could be of financial benefit to the Council after 2020.
- 3.10 The Council has a good collection history, achieving 98.8% collection in 2013/14 and 96.6% in 2012/13. The Council is usually in the top quartile for performance in collecting BR. Over £1 million in arrears was collected in 2013-14. Public Houses were a particular feature of the arrears position. Nationally, there has been an increasing use of innovative BR avoidance schemes, which exploited the legislation concerning empty buildings and put income levels at risk, and at the time of our review the Council had around £1 million arrears in respect of BR avoidance schemes.
- 3.11 Bracknell Forest has a large amount of empty office space, with many properties receiving reductions in Rateable Value in 2014 due to reduced rental levels; and the Council has no right of appeal. Other local features are that some new premises cannot be brought into rating as in law they remain incomplete; and the Council has made provision in its accounts for around £4million for losses on appeals by ratepayers.
- 3.12 The amount charged for BR is reported to be a significant factor for businesses deciding where to locate their operations. Bracknell Forest has many unoccupied business premises and in recent years the Council has applied a fresh emphasis on promoting economic development. This raises the question whether the Council

should explore the scope for using the new legal powers for councils to operate discretionary BR reliefs to encourage business to occupy premises, thus increasing BR income in the longer term and supporting economic development in Bracknell Forest. Any scheme of discretionary BR reliefs could be reviewed and amended as frequently as the Council wished.

Why Did We carry out This Review?

3.13 The Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Commission decided to review Business Rates because:

- We had not reviewed the Council's performance in this very important function previously
- We wanted to raise awareness of Business Rates and build members understanding of the topic
- We wanted to seek assurance that the government's part-localisation of BR had not disadvantaged Bracknell Forest.
- We wanted to explore whether the Council should take the opportunity of exercising its new statutory powers to grant discretionary relief for BR.

Purpose And Approach Of The Working Group

3.14 The Working Group saw its broad purpose as building understanding of BR in the Bracknell Forest context including BR avoidance schemes, exploring how the Council might make innovative use of BR to bring unoccupied buildings into use and to stimulate economic development, and to scrutinise the Council's performance. The approach we took to our work was to meet a range of people inside and outside the Council with relevant knowledge and experience of the issue, and we supplemented this with research and analysis of our own, supported by Council officers. This was all set out in the standard scoping document for O&S reviews, at Appendix 1.

4. Investigation, Information Gathering and Analysis

This section of the report is based mainly on the meetings which we held. Alan Nash (Borough Treasurer) was our Link Officer throughout the review and he, Richard Beaumont (Head of Overview and Scrutiny), and Sarah Kingston (Revenue Services Manager), attended all of our meetings.

Introductory Review Work

- 4.1 The Working Group ('the Group') met for the first time on **19 May 2014** to elect a Lead Member (Councillor Angell); to receive an introductory briefing about Business Rates (BR) from officers; and to discuss the approach to be taken by the Working Group, with **Alison Sanders** (Director of Corporate Services), **Alan Nash** (Borough Treasurer), **Bobby Mulheir** (Chief Officer, Customer Services), **Sarah Kingston** (Revenue Services Manager, and **Richard Beaumont** (Head of Overview and Scrutiny).
- 4.2 The Group received written material in advance and a presentation, the content of which is summarised in the section 3 of this report
- 4.3 The Group subsequently formalised the approach to its review in the standard scoping document for Overview and Scrutiny reviews, attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.4 Other key matters arising from members' questions and in discussion were:
 - a) The substantial additional BR income from a major telecommunications company was a windfall unplanned by the Council and central government. There were risks applying to that income, for example the company had the option of paying its BR directly to central government.
 - b) Community amateur sports clubs only qualify for BR relief if they are registered with HM Revenue and Customs.
 - c) The government's retail relief scheme had seen unusually low take-up in the Borough, so officers were issuing more and simpler guidance on that.
 - d) Agricultural holdings are exempt from BR.
 - e) Two large, vacant office buildings could not be rated as they were not deemed to be 'complete' by reference to the regulations, which were rather indistinct on the term. There had been numerous court cases on this aspect, and it seemed that Tribunals often tended to agree with the ratepayers' position.
 - f) The Revenue Services Manager is IRRV (Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV) qualified, as are some Revenue Services team members.

Views of Executive Members

- 4.5 On **17 June 2014**, the Group met **Councillor McCracken** (Executive Member for Corporate Services); and **Councillor Brunel-Walker**, Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration. The Group had a later meeting on 21 July with **Councillor Ward**, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance. At both meetings, we sought views on the Executive's plans regarding Business Rates, and in what ways the O&S review might be most helpful to Bracknell Forest Council (BFC, 'The Council').

How can our review be of most help to the Executive?

- 4.6 Councillor McCracken (IM) summarised the respective roles of the three Executive Members in relation to BR: his main responsibility being in the collection of BR; Cllr Brunel-Walker's (MB-W) being in relation to economic development and regeneration; and Cllr Ward's being in regard to Council finance. IM said it would be helpful if the Group would explore how much room for change there was in the current framework, with reference to discretionary BR relief schemes operated by other councils, and whether change was applicable to BFC's circumstances, for example whether the Group felt there was a business benefit to be had from revising current arrangements and how long other similar local authorities had been running their schemes and with what success. IM also posed the question of whether a discretionary scheme would be of benefit to the Council given the collection rate it was achieving and the delicate balance which needed to be struck not only to retain current businesses while at the same time seeking new businesses to the regenerated town centre of Bracknell.
- 4.7 IM added that it would be useful for the Group to explore the BR avoidance schemes encountered by other councils, and how they had reacted to those schemes, and he would welcome the Group's thoughts and recommendations on how the Council might combat and 'get ahead of the game' on the avoidance loopholes. The Group was informed that to date, the Council had not challenged any avoidance schemes through the courts, though it had worked with the LGA in challenging the legitimacy of BR avoidance tactics. The Council was monitoring emerging case law, and it kept an open mind over prospective joint legal action with other rating authorities to combat avoidance. The Council was not lobbying the Borough's MPs to tackle the national loopholes in BR. The Executive had decided to 'tighten up' BR collection, but to date had not considered individual avoidance schemes in detail.
- 4.8 Bobby Mulheir (BM) commented that some business frequently failed to pay their BR on time, and the sums were pursued rigorously. Separately, some businesses had chosen to take advantage of the Government's scheme for deferred BR payments. Arrears cases were pursued appropriately and rigorously, including use of bailiffs. IM said there would be no point in pursuing arrears where the business had gone into liquidation, and efforts should arguably be targeted at the more high value arrears cases. BM commented that BFC frequently obtained settlements of arrears without needing to embark on formal action, and she cautioned against a 'one size fits all' approach. The WG asked for a list of arrears cases and two case studies, which it subsequently reviewed at its next meeting in July.
- 4.9 The Group was told that the Council paid over to central government its share of the BR collected, not the BR which was due. Some 98-99% was collected out of the c. £70 million due, leaving around £0.5M uncollected. Alan Nash (AN) explained that the £4million provision for possibly lost appeal cases was in its first year, having previously been a liability for central government. It was too early to know whether the provision would be actually used, and the worst case would be that the Council would have to use the full amount, which would be shared approximately 50/50 with central government. MB-W expressed the view that BFC needs to be seen to be being helpful to businesses, whilst also being firm on collecting BR.
- 4.10 Councillor Ward (AW) said it would be helpful if the Group could explore how a discretionary BR relief scheme could assist the regeneration of Bracknell Town centre. He stressed the need to have a cautious approach to forgoing income, which equated to higher expenditure. However, in the context of discretionary BR relief, it would be of no concern if the relief was given in respect of a building which would otherwise remain empty/produce no BR income stream to the Council. The Council

also needed to take account of the interest of central government, particularly in relation to BFC having to pay over to central government their 'share' of the BR forgone. AN explained that the pay-over to central government was also influenced by other factors, including whether the amount of BR collected exceeded the amount generated by the DCLG formula for the amount of BR they deem to be 'needed' by each council. AW said it would be important to attract business occupants into Bracknell town centre, and that would yield a BR income flow. AW cautioned about the windfall BR income from a major telecommunications company becoming over-subscribed, saying that the £5 million gain would not be retained by BFC after 2020, and possibly sooner.

- 4.11 AW stressed the need to protect the Council's financial position and a balanced revenue budget over the long term, and said that the risks pertaining to a discretionary relief scheme would have to be recognised in any business case for its introduction. He saw the justification for relief being stronger to support the regeneration of Bracknell town centre. It could possibly be used to attract inward investment or expansions elsewhere in the Borough, though this was unlikely to be of sufficient benefit to the Borough to justify the cost. One Member expressed the view that it should be possible to quantify the risks with a high level of certainty, and to limit them, such that the risk could be covered by a budgetary provision. AW agreed that the financial risk could be quantified more than – for example - the risk that central government might choose to cease the discretionary power, or further change the BR redistribution regime.

What is the Executive's general approach to 'spend to save' measures, i.e. in this case deliberately forgoing Business Rates income under a discretionary relief scheme, in the hope that it will stimulate occupation of premises and result in greater rates income in the fullness of time?

- 4.12 Councillor Brunel-Walker said that BFC's new Business and Enterprise Service (BES) team was already working actively on this. Three officers were in post, and the current priority was to create a two year plan for BES, which should be presented to the Portfolio Review Group, and subsequently the Executive in July. Discretionary BR relief would serve to 'sweeten the deal' for prospective business development in Bracknell town centre, but any scheme needed to cover more than Bracknell town centre, and should aim to encourage growth in particular sectors or aimed at companies which employ former NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) people, for example. Members asked which businesses had been approached about this. MB-W said that BFC had spoken to the Economic and Skills Development Partnership; there had been a survey of business attitudes in support of the work plan; and there would be further discussions with businesses. On being asked about the targeting of particular sectors, perhaps with particular reference to manufacturing, MB-W said that the Borough was known for technology but less on manufacturing; identification was in progress, and a wide range of sectors was to be considered. MB-W added that (as part of the Thames Valley Berkshire City Deal) BFC was being granted an additional £0.7m by central government to reduce NEETS.
- 4.13 The Group observed that the Borough had a predominance of company Head Offices, and asked whether a survey of them had been carried out. MB-W said no survey had been carried out, but engagement with business would be an important part of the BES work plan. One Member expressed the view that the Borough suffered from a lack of variety of job opportunities, particularly in manufacturing; the Education sector should be encouraged to offer educational facilities to address that need.

- 4.14 The Group queried whether a Business Park elsewhere in Berkshire was attracting resources or taking initiatives beyond those of BFC. MB-W said the co-location at the Business Park was an attractive aspect, and the Park had spent millions of pounds in encouraging businesses to locate there.
- 4.15 IM said that the Executive had not set any precedents on 'spend to save', but were flexible on the matter. 'Spend to save' decisions were extremely important, though the timing needed to be right. This was something of a balancing act between attending to existing businesses and attracting inward investment. MB-W drew attention to the competition with other areas for inward investment.

How pro-active do you think the Council should be in combating rates avoidance schemes?

- 4.16 IM suggested that the Group should enquire about the types of avoidance schemes, how long they had operated, and what success there had been in combating them. Similarly, the Group might usefully look into the types of discretionary relief schemes, how long they have been running, and how effective they have been. MB-W suggested that the Group should build understanding and look at whether there is more the Council should do to combat avoidance schemes. The Group observed that BR avoidance schemes were mainly national issues where resolution depended on case law precedent.

How significant would a discretionary relief scheme be to company decision making on locating in Bracknell Forrest?

- 4.17 MB-W told the Group that BR was not in the top five issues for companies when they decided where to locate. He saw BR as being probably somewhere between 5 and 10 on a list from business of important things to consider. Local schemes might act as a 'sweetener' but BR would not be a major material consideration when choosing between, for example, Bracknell and another nearby town. In the case of a large company recently choosing to locate in Bracknell, it had no bearing on their decision, and in the case of another company choosing to relocate away from Bracknell it likewise had zero bearing on their decision to leave. BM observed that this might have a stronger influence on smaller companies and start-ups.
- 4.18 Other matters arising from members' questions and in discussion were:
- a) BFC's general approach, when faced with BR avoidance schemes, is to keep invoicing unless it was clearly unsustainable to do so.
 - b) In the event of the Council losing a BR appeal to the courts, the loss was shared equally between the government and BFC. Recently, there had been a number of appeals over rateable values, some of which had been lodged by Rating Agents years previously.
 - c) One major company paid its BR through a Rating Agent.
 - d) The Council is not permitted to charge interest on overdue BR.
 - e) It was noted that a House of Commons Committee had recommended changes to BR.
 - f) A business analyst was being recruited, funded by 'City Deal'.
 - g) Some local authorities had used pension fund monies to provide venture capital to stimulate start-ups.
 - h) MB-W commented that more incubator units were coming into being.
 - i) MB-W said that both Councillors Heydon and Wade, as Business Champions, would be involved in the BES work around BR. MB-W was keen to have a joint focus on this, without overlapping activity with the O&S Group.

- j) AW concurred with MB-W's view that BR was not a critical factor for large businesses' decisions on whether to locate in Bracknell Forest, though it would be part of their overall consideration.
 - k) On timing of any discretionary scheme, AW saw no reason for delay, particularly if it could be used to assist in completing the town centre regeneration, which he saw to be of over-riding importance. Nevertheless, it remained essential to recognise the attendant risks.
 - l) AN said that the Council responded to government consultations on proposed changes to the BR policy and arrangements, but it had to be recognised that some other councils might express opposing views to BFC.
 - m) There might be justification in a discretionary relief scheme applying beyond the town centre, though retail units outside the town centre were mainly occupied.
- 4.19 The Group recognised that BR formed part of a wider economic development picture, and decided not to adopt a wider focus in its review; for example, the O&S Commission's work programme included a separate piece of work in making an input to the review of the Council's Economic Development Strategy. Members considered that the main value of its work would be to seek assurance that the income secured from BR was at the optimum level, and secondly to recommend to the Executive the case for and broad form of a discretionary BR relief scheme.

The Business and Enterprise Service

- 4.20 On **21 July 2014** the Group also met **Victor Nicholls** (VN, Assistant Chief Executive) and **Robert Jolley** (RJ, Team Manager, Business and Enterprise Service), to discuss how the Council might make innovative use of BR to bring unoccupied buildings into use, and to stimulate economic development; with particular reference to the regeneration of Bracknell town centre.

*From your contact with the business world, what would be most helpful to them?
Have you surveyed the views of businesses?*

- 4.21 VN said the Council had not assumed it knew what businesses' view was on this, consequently two surveys had been carried out. 700 businesses had been surveyed by the Chamber of Commerce, also in the summer of 2012 MORI had surveyed major companies. The results of the MORI survey supported Cllr Brunel-Walker's comments about major companies, whose top factors for location decisions were: a suitably skilled workforce; good transport; and overall cost/value for money (which included BR but mainly constituted property costs). The responses to the Chamber's survey of Small and Medium size Enterprises (SME) were that: 34% did not need any particular help from BFC; 18% said lower business rates would be helpful; and 15% said that transport was their key factor. It was notable that the SMEs included a significant number of home-based sole traders, for whom BR would not be an issue.
- 4.22 RJ described two major surveys planned to take place. One would be a wide ranging survey on infrastructure, to include BR, later in 2014. The survey questions had not yet been designed, but might replicate some of those used in the MORI survey. The other survey would be on skills issues. RJ explained the role of the Economic and Skills Development Partnership's sub-group on infrastructure as being primarily on physical issues, such as air travel links and buildings availability. Businesses' needs were changing, for example many businesses wanted to occupy smaller buildings. There would be professional campaigns for both surveys, and it would be important to manage expectations.

Other matters arising from members' questions and in discussion were:

- a) VN's view was that a discretionary BR relief scheme would not make any difference to the investment/location decision of a major company. However, there could be potential value in such relief being used to support indigenous business growth – for example in the transition from home-based working to separate premises.
- b) It was noted that the legal team would be providing the Working Group with legal advice on state aid issues and other considerations.
- c) The Business and Enterprise Service's focus was on engendering indigenous businesses, particularly technology businesses with high growth potential.

Views Of The Business Community

- 4.23 On **27 August 2014** the Group visited Oxford Innovation Ltd.'s site at Lily Hill House, Bracknell, meeting **Matthew Harrington** (MH, Commercial Director Oxford Innovation Ltd, OI), and **David Knowles Leak** (DKL, Regional Chairman, Thames Valley Federation of Small Businesses, FSB), who had been invited to give their views on the case for and possible scope of a discretionary Business Rates relief scheme in Bracknell Forest. RA said that the Working Group (WG) was in the process of gathering views and information, including a visit to Croydon Council, which operated a discretionary relief scheme. Once that was complete, the WG would decide whether to make recommendations to the Council's Executive over a prospective Business Rates (BR) discretionary relief scheme for Bracknell Forest.
- 4.24 MH summarised OI's business. OI manage a UK network of 20 Business & Innovation Centres, including Lily Hill House, that provide an environment for start-ups and Small and Medium Size businesses (SMEs) to grow. The centres are managed on behalf of public and private sector building owners who require a financial return, whilst contributing to economic growth locally. MH suggested that a BR discretionary relief scheme should be targeted at those areas which derive the most benefit, such as helping small business to grow, and in stimulating economic development.
- 4.25 MH drew attention to the Small Business Rate Relief* (SBRR) scheme, saying that it is a significant consideration for small companies' investment decisions. MH commented that it would be valuable to have more certainty over its continuation beyond March 2015, as its removal would be harmful. OI make use of the SBRR, also the three months relief for voids, to good effect in helping small businesses' viability. MH stressed the value of any relief to alleviate the initial set-up costs of an innovation centre, where the up-front capital costs in particular are significant. MH illustrated this by reference to the Solent Enterprise Zone at Daedalus, South Hampshire, which qualifies for 100% BR relief as it is an Enterprise Zone. Such relief makes a major difference to an innovation centre and small business's viability in the early stages, thus gearing relief towards mitigating early stage costs would be valuable. MH also described OI's involvement in managing part of Ocean House in Bracknell for a fee from the owners of the building. Two floors are now filled with tenant businesses, but

* Small business rate relief applies until 31 March 2015 to businesses which only use one property, and the rateable value is less than £12,000. Such companies get 100% relief (doubled from the usual rate of 50%) for properties with a rateable value of £6,000 or less. The rate of relief will gradually decrease from 100% to 0% for properties with a rateable value between £6,001 and £12,000.

a decision whether OI should take on another floor inevitably means fit out costs and a short term loss until the space can be rented out; relief from BR for around 6-9 months would make the OI business case more viable. MH observed that there is a degree of acceptance of BR in the business community, as with other taxes, but that should not be interpreted as business not seeing BR to be significant. For example, the reduction in empty property relief in 2007 caused widespread protests to central government. Other matters arising from members' questions and in discussion were:

- a) Due to differences in individual business's circumstances, there is no single 'break point' where BR relief would change from being a critical factor and become a 'nice to have' factor. MH said that BR costs are relevant to investors contemplating making new investments, and additional BR relief might enable OI to consider applying lower rental charges for tenants.
- b) OI was unaware of other councils operating discretionary BR relief schemes to stimulate economic activity. OI had, however seen other forms of public assistance – such as European Regional Development Fund funding to regenerate the Barnsley local economy.
- c) OI's public sector commissioned operations tended to have a higher proportion of workshops than their private sector commissioned operations (which tended to be more on office space).
- d) MH said the key period for the businesses they work with is the first two years of operation.

4.26 DKL summarised the role of the FSB, as the largest business organisation in Europe, also his role on the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), and welcomed the opportunity to give the FSB's views on BR to the Council. Bracknell Forest's profile of businesses was broadly similar to the national profile. DKL described the failure rate and developmental journey of business's growth. Small businesses' viability and prospects for success could be assisted in various ways, such as fairer leases, support for skills development and incubator premises. DKL drew a distinction between taxes on profits, which were easier to bear and seen to be more equitable than taxes such as BR which applied regardless of activity, profitability or ability to pay. DKL also drew attention to small businesses rarely using their full capacity, such that there is a lot of untapped capacity there.

4.27 DKL said that the FSB believed that total reform of BR was required: it was unfair and bore no relationship to the ability to pay, and for many businesses it was the most significant cost after rent and employee costs. The FSB had campaigned for an SBRR scheme, and it was of concern that the take-up rate was low, at some 50 - 60% nationally. DKL drew attention to statistics produced by the FSB, which illustrated the huge significance of SMEs to the UK economy. For example, at the start of 2013, SMEs accounted for 99.9% of the estimated 4.9 million businesses in the UK, employing 14.4 million people and with a turnover of £1,600 Billion. DKL said that SMEs have massive potential.

4.28 DKL encouraged the Council to target BR incentives around business start-ups, particularly as they have a direct effect on fixed costs. A BR relief scheme needed to be selective if it was to be effective. Examples might be: helping the transition from home working to renting premises; or capitalising on the unique advantages of the Bracknell Forest locality. Any relief scheme also needed to be easy to access, with support available. An effective relief scheme should also connect well with Thames Valley LEP initiatives, and take account of local socio-economic factors.

- 4.29 DKL and MH encouraged the Council to publicise examples of how its prospective relief scheme had benefitted particular businesses, to encourage greater take-up. Other matters arising from members' questions and in discussion were:
- a) Neither MH nor DKL saw much scope for debating change to the national BR regime.
 - b) Alan Nash (AN) explained the BR retention rules, with reference to what happens if BR income exceeds the threshold set by central government, and the wide freedom councils have in deciding what, if any, discretionary BR relief scheme to have. AN added that the Council is keen to understand the perspective of the business community on the various factors that might feature in a prospective discretionary relief scheme.
 - c) Members commented that criteria for a relief scheme might possibly include: assisting the regeneration of Bracknell town centre; supporting apprenticeships in manual trades; and small business units. DKL expressed the view that incubator units were well worth supporting, but cautioned against confining relief to the town centre, as many businesses were located elsewhere. The town centre has a high proportion of retail businesses, which had experienced challenging conditions.
 - d) MH commented that car park charges can have a powerful effect on footfall in town centres.
 - e) Businesses' decisions on location tended to be more critical as their employee numbers grew, also if the nature of the business was location-specific. MH quoted an example of an old office building in Witney, which had achieved 82% occupancy. The tenants needed good broadband connection and other facilities, but most were flexible on location.
 - f) BR is a less significant factor in premises which have high rent charges.
 - g) As to whether a BR relief scheme might attract businesses to Bracknell Forest, MH observed that location decisions were based on many factors, such as transport links, and the proximity of other businesses with trading potential. Some conventional concepts, such as large faceless buildings isolated from others were now outmoded. Small business tended to think differently than larger businesses, for example on individual lifestyle choice and workspace.
 - h) DKL commented on the need for a 'ladder' to help businesses through the successive stages of their growth and development. Confidence and pride in the local community was also an important factor.
 - i) On the prospective 'tapering off' of BR relief, MH stressed the value which businesses attached to having certainty over their finances, particularly as many small business were constantly searching for a more viable business model. MH acknowledged that at some point, small businesses needed to become self-sufficient, and the answer was to withdraw the relief at the appropriate time – ideally linked to their ability to pay BR – rather than have a fixed time for ending the relief.
 - j) MH complimented the Council for giving thought, in an open-minded way, to supporting businesses through a prospective BR relief scheme.
- 4.30 On **30 September 2014**, the Group met **Paul Briggs (PB)**, Chief Executive, Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce, to hear the Chamber's views on the case for and possible scope of a discretionary BR relief scheme in Bracknell Forest. PB said that BR were not a major consideration for most large companies, conversely BR were an important issue for many start-up and small businesses. PB encouraged the Council to see a discretionary BR relief scheme as an investment for the future, rather than as income forgone. The Chamber welcomed the prospective BR relief scheme. PB advised that it would be important for the scheme to be protected from abuse, and be well publicised.

- 4.31 PB described how the TV Chamber had been based in Slough as a tenant of Slough Estates (with smaller offices elsewhere across TV) for some 50 years, and the Chamber would have struggled to be based there without discretionary assistance from Slough Borough Council. The Chamber currently received 60-70% relief from Slough BC, and there was no guarantee over future relief. The Slough area benefitted from the Chamber's assistance on matters of value to the local authority and the community, such as attracting inward investment and mentoring schemes. PB said that some voluntary and not-for-profit organisations would struggle if they were burdened with full commercial costs; yet they were able to assist local authorities with various services of value to councils' wider objectives, for example in assisting the long-term unemployed to find work. Consequently, the Chamber would be supportive of a BR relief scheme aimed at smaller businesses (which would also like to see the recognition which partnership with a council would bring) and the not-for-profit sector.
- 4.32 The TV Chamber is a not-for-profit organisation, delivering some 200 events each year, and a regular newsletter, for example. It receives no public funding, and its income comprises membership fees, charges for processing export documentation, and income from providing a wide range of consultancy services.
- 4.33 PB considered that Bracknell Forest has a phenomenal opportunity arising from the regeneration of Bracknell town centre, and the Chamber is willing to help promote the area. In a similar way, the opening of The Oracle centre had transformed the image of Reading. Bracknell Forest needs a 'hook' to hang its future image on, for example being Business Friendly (supported by case studies). PB said that the Council was welcome to put such material on the Chamber website, also in their magazine. Other organisations such as the CBI and IOD might also be able to similarly help.

Other matters arising from members' questions and in discussion were:

- a) PB considered that a BR relief scheme should be time-limited, perhaps tapering off over 2-3 years, and it would be important for businesses to know where they stood on that.
- b) PB said that the prospective relief scheme should be designed to show that support is genuinely needed, also that the Council receives something back in return for the relief.
- c) The Chamber saw most start-up businesses comprising around 1-10 employees, with corporate organisations having around 40-50 employees. There were exceptions, for example some companies with higher sales turnover had few employees and occupied little space.
- d) The Chamber did not think that location had been as important to business as it had been previously. Small companies saw an advantage in co-locating near other small businesses in the same sector.
- e) Serviced offices are one means of helping home workers to progress towards having their own premises. PB said that a growing number of businesses operated from people's homes, but this business model was not universal.
- f) PB agreed that a BR relief scheme in isolation would not be as effective as one delivered alongside other business support measures, for example having a small business centre or advice line on Human Resources issues. PB added that the Chamber could help to set up a hub or deliver a series of seminars, for example.
- g) The difficulty in getting companies to take up offers of assistance was recognised.

- h) The 'trigger point' for home-based businesses to move into business premises was usually when they won a larger contract. They often started by using serviced offices, then subsequently to premises of their own.
- i) It would be important to demonstrate that any relief scheme is fair. Efforts should not just be aimed at attracting new businesses; retaining existing businesses is very important, and it is also important to understand the client base.

The London Borough Of Croydon

- 4.34 The Group decided to visit Croydon, to learn about their experience as one of the first councils to have introduced a discretionary BR relief scheme. On **28 August 2014** we met **Councillor Toni Letts** (Cabinet Member for Economic Development), **Councillor Wayne Lawlor**, **Lisa McCance** (Head Of Economic Development), **Jivko Hristov** (Economic Strategy Manager), and **Ose Akpom** (Senior Project Officer).
- 4.35 Councillor Letts (TL) described Croydon's local economy. There are 13,000 businesses employing 141,000 people. There are a number of 'tired' older office blocks, and new offices are being built. Croydon has a major retail centre, and the Council is keen to develop district centres. The Council (LBC) has a number of measures to support economic development, including a discretionary BR relief scheme, which makes a real difference, and which had recently been extended to 2016. TL gave an example of a recent case to illustrate LBC's support for small local traders, where she had been advised that a retail unit was at risk of closing. It was in a prominent location and closure would have had a negative impact. Applying discretionary BR relief had enabled the shop to remain open, safeguarding the jobs of the six people working there.
- 4.36 Unemployment in Croydon is around 6%, and there had been a 32% reduction in the number of people receiving Job Seeker's allowance in recent years. There is a small manufacturing sector in Croydon, with more prominence in the knowledge-based and retail sectors. There would not be sufficient land available for new industry given the need for housing land and other demands.
- 4.37 LBC officers delivered a presentation on LBC's BR relief scheme, with reference to its origins following the civil disturbances of 2011, £5 million funding from the Greater London Authority (GLA) for supporting Croydon's businesses (of which £1.1 million was allocated to the discretionary BR relief scheme), its commencement in January 2013, eligibility criteria, the rationale and scope of the scheme (confined to the Croydon new town 'opportunity area'), target outputs, the changes introduced to the scheme, marketing, and the scheme's achievements with reference to three named businesses. The riots had caused footfall in Croydon to be much reduced, but three years later the position was greatly improved, which was partly attributable to BR relief.
- 4.38 We were informed that LBC aspires to be a European city, and has clarity on the growth sectors to apply its energies to, for example IT and tech-based businesses. LBC has a strong offering for supporting micro businesses and start-ups. They had identified a gap for property-related support to less-small businesses. BR relief forms part of a wider programme of support to businesses, for example they advise on supply chains, they assist in introductions and identification of potential contracts, and they have a broadband 'voucher' scheme for SME's to spend up to £3,000 on broadband cabling. A further initiative had been to work with landlords of five refurbished buildings to help to let the space, and all but one of those had been

successfully let out. LBC also has a £2 million loan fund which had been very successful. It charges competitive interest rates and was close to being self-sustaining. It is run by a commercial company which makes use of credit rating, etc. Loans were coupled with business support advice. LBC had become aware that there was significant empty office space in Croydon, a lot of which was being converted to residential dwellings using permitted development rights. TL commented that BR relief could be used to tackle a problem as well accelerating an opportunity. Matters arising from the presentation and discussion were:

- a) £1 million had been granted by the GLA to LBC for the scheme, consequently there was no additional cost to LBC. The main benefits of the scheme were: more and better buildings; increased employment; and improved business confidence.
- b) LBC had underestimated the time delay between launching the scheme and in signing up individual businesses.
- c) The low level of take-up had led LBC to decide to revisit the scheme's parameters and commission a specialist media company. This had led LBC to simplify the scheme to deliver 100% relief in the first year ('Free for a year' being the headline message). That slogan arose from the media company encouraging LBC to keep the message simple. In hindsight, it would have been better to have engaged marketing help earlier.
- d) The targets were set by reference to the budget amount and the profiling of 'cohorts' of businesses expected to participate. This required some educated guesswork, and targets were re-profiled in the light of ensuing practical experience.
- e) The scheme – in concert with other LBC support mechanisms, such as broadband, advice on training and rent relief - had served to 'tip' some businesses to locate in Croydon. Such companies rarely showed signs of wanting to leave the borough afterwards, possibly because the costs of relocation would be significant for them. IT companies had chosen to re-locate to Croydon for various reasons in addition to BR relief, including ease of travel to East London, also Croydon's talent pool of young people. An example was given of a web design business which had started in a room over a restaurant in Croydon, and now had offices world-wide, whilst retaining its presence in Croydon.
- f) LBC monitor progress by BR relief businesses quarterly, with reference to the number of apprenticeships or other outputs set in their application forms. LBC also actively account-managed those businesses. LBC has some 14 staff engaged in economic development roles.
- g) In retrospect, LBC would have liked more time to have researched the business base at the outset, so as to target the scheme's parameters in the most effective way.
- h) LBC supports an independent organisation which runs incubator units; they also have an active FSB presence.
- i) The BR relief scheme would probably not have had as much success if it had been a stand-alone support mechanism, rather than one of a number of alternative and additional support measures – this strengthened its effectiveness.
- j) On the basis of LBC's experience, officers advised that a BR relief scheme should: not be over-prescriptive; not have too many targets; and have clear messages supported by good communications and marketing.
- k) LBC officers intended seeking member approval for a continuation of the BR relief scheme beyond 2016 when the GLA funding was due to end. Croydon anticipates further regeneration taking place, making on-going support for

economic development valuable. Further developments might include using BR as a form of lending tool.

- l) LBC's performance in collecting rates is high, at around 98%.
- m) Businesses had assured LBC that BR relief had been a deciding factor in making their investment.

Review of Information

- 4.39 In addition to meeting various people inside and outside the Council, the Group also gathered and analysed information from a variety of sources, as set out below.

Business Rates Avoidance Schemes

- 4.40 At its meeting on 21 July, the Group reviewed information provided by the Revenue Services Manager on schemes in use by those wanting to avoid paying BR. We were told that there are several different business rates avoidance schemes in operation in every local authority's area across the country. These types of schemes have evolved over the last 7 years and are becoming more and more elaborate and difficult for local authorities to prevent.
- 4.41 Prior to 2007 business rates on empty premises were charged at 50% after the initial period of exemption had expired. With effect from 1 April 2007 empty rates became chargeable at 100% after the initial exemption period in a bid by the government to bring empty business premises back into use. This change saw the beginning of the empty rate avoidance schemes. There are two main tactics that are used in order to avoid business rates on empty premises:
- The first scheme involves very minimal occupation of the premises for 6 weeks at a time and then vacating again for three months. At the point at which a property becomes unoccupied, an exemption from business rates can be applied for a maximum period of three months, after which 100% rates are payable.
 - The second type of scheme involves leasing the premises to a charity. If a charity is registered with the charity commission and uses the premises in question 'wholly or mainly' for charitable purposes then they are only liable to pay 20% business rates. The charity generally takes a lease on premises (usually large premises) for a minimal or peppercorn rent and uses the property sporadically for activities that are claimed to be charitable.
- 4.42 At the present time avoidance schemes are a national issue and we were advised that many will probably continue to succeed unless the legislation is amended to close the scope for avoidance. The reality is that councils can do very little to prevent business rates avoidance as many of these schemes are found to be legal, and unfortunately these schemes are becoming more and more popular as landlords look to reduce their rates liability.
- 4.43 The largest avoidance schemes in operation in our area and across the country involve charities, and we were told that the government has asked the Charity Commission to look into this. Officers also advised that the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) was aware of the BR avoidance schemes, but there was no sign of the government making any changes for the next 2-3 years, perhaps because local authorities now share the 'lost income' arising from avoidance. In reality, there is very little BFC can do to combat avoidance schemes. It was confirmed that this does not affect the collection rate, as BFC does not raise BR invoices where the charitable relief, etc., is legitimate. We were also advised that BFC

often grants empty property relief, and only part of that arises from avoidance schemes. We were given details of a forthcoming exhibition by a registered charity which temporarily uses buildings for displaying art.

The Council's Performance in Collecting Business Rates

- 4.44 At its meeting on 28 October, the Group reviewed the outcome of one of our Member's analysis of the effectiveness of collection of BR. The analysis showed that BR are collected efficiently and effectively with little practical room for any improvement. Arrears are being managed assiduously with the one area of significant concern being the huge loss to avoidance schemes.
- 4.45 The analysis showed that the total Rateable Value of Bracknell Forest's rateable premises is £169m. With a 2014 Standard Multiplier of 48.2 pence in the pound this equates to £81.5m due. Allowing for reliefs and exemptions this figure falls to some £77m. If the collection is 98.79% this leaves uncollected rates for the year of £930k.
- 4.46 Overall, the Council has an unusually good rate collection, both for Council Tax and business. This is supported by a separate publication by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), the NNDR Benchmarking Club report for 2013. This compared the Council's performance against around 50 other councils on a variety of aspects of performance, such as the collection rate, the amount written off, the costs of collection and the grading of staff deployed. The CIPFA analysis places BFC well with an average collection rate in the high 96+%. This is further strengthened as BFC have one of the lowest net balances outstanding and amounts written off across the UK Unitary Authorities. The Business Rate collection is even better with a current collection rate of 98.79%. The Member was also impressed by the depth of knowledge shown by revenue officers of individual situations and the ability to provide proof behind the figures.
- 4.47 Our attention was drawn to concerns over the extent of and future risks posed by BR avoidance, and consideration was being given to including this issue in the corporate risk register. We were informed by officers that other measures to combat BR avoidance were under consideration, taking legal advice on whether the Council could deny relief in some cases. Members expressed their concern at the growing, national problem on BR avoidance, and the need for central government to act upon it.

Appeals Cases and the Collection of BR Arrears

- 4.48 At its meeting on 21 July, the Group reviewed information provided by the Revenue Services Manager on appeals cases and the Council's performance on the collection of BR arrears, with reference to case studies. We discussed with officers the action being taken on each. Some actions had been progressed to bailiffs, etc., and we were satisfied that the action being taken on each case was appropriate and robust. We observed that there are a large number of appeals pending, involving properties with rateable values totalling some £23 million, and some appeals had been running for four or more years. We were informed that the appeals are between the ratepayer and the Valuation Office Agency regarding the rateable value of the premises, the Council having no involvement in these appeals apart from creating a provision for the potential loss that these may cause. In order to calculate the appeals provision, with the help of a third party, the Council uses the list of those that are outstanding and calculates an anticipated loss on each appeal based on the success of other similar appeals, type of premises etc. We were encouraged to learn that during

quarter one of 2014/15, the number of appeals outstanding dropped by 78 demonstrating that the number is decreasing.

4.49 Other matters arising from members' questions and in discussion were:

- a) A major ratepayer's rating agent had disagreed with the rating assessment.
- b) Businesses have the option to pay BR in 10 or 12 instalments over the year.
- c) The Revenue team commence 'chasing' action soon after a BR payment becomes overdue. Pursuing BR debts can sometimes put a business into insolvency, after which it is very unlikely that any payment would be received, so that requires a judicious approach. Public Houses are a particular problem area for BR.
- d) BR appeals were a dispute between a business and the Valuation Office Agency. Consequently they are outside the Council's control, and the Council has to await the outcome of the appeals process, which can be lengthy. BR is still due pending the outcome of an appeal.
- e) The Revenue Services team has 15 staff, of which two concentrate on BR.

Sharing of Business Rates Income

4.50 The Council is permitted under legislation and government rules to keep only part of the rates paid by businesses in Bracknell Forest, hence the government's 'Localisation' of BR would be more accurately described as a part-localisation. The Group reviewed a note by the Borough Treasurer (AN) showing how the BR income had been shared out in 2013/14. AN explained that the Government decides how much grant and BR income the Council needs to deliver council services. As BFC received a higher amount than the government's formula amount, the government applies a tariff; and the tariffed amounts are pooled by the Government and re-distributed to those councils which received less income than their formula amounts. AN advised that the cost of any BR relief scheme would be a budget pressure.

European Union State Aid Restrictions

4.51 The Group sought and reviewed legal advice on EU state aids restrictions applying to rates relief. We were told that the Government had not issued guidance in respect of how Section 69 of the Localism Act 2011 (which provides the new discretionary BR power) might be used, but the Council would have to ensure that the reliefs it allows do not transgress the European Union (EU) state aid rules. Relief from taxes, including non-domestic rates, can constitute state aid under EU legislation. There are block exemptions from the state aid rules where the aid is below a de minimis (i.e. small) level. The de minimis level applies to all de minimis aid received, including other Government subsidies or grants, in addition to any rate relief given as de minimis aid. This is €200,000 over a three year period below which any aid is allowable. This does not apply in certain sectors including transport, agriculture, fisheries, coal and steel where any amount of relief is state aid. Billing authorities should bear this in mind when granting discretionary rate reliefs. Any relief exceeding the de minimis threshold, or of any amount for businesses in the sectors where the threshold does not apply, may need to be notified to the European Commission. Legal Officers also advised us that it would be acceptable to rely on a declaration from a business concerning state aids they had received, and there was no obligation on the Council to verify those details.

Information on the extent of unoccupied office/retail/industrial space

- 4.52 The Group requested and subsequently reviewed a listing of empty commercial properties in Bracknell Forest. This totalled almost 3 million square feet, presenting plenty of suitable space for small businesses.

Other councils' discretionary Business Rates relief schemes

- 4.53 We carried out internet research on nine other councils' discretionary Business Rates relief schemes, analysing the characteristics of each scheme. We noted that one nearby Council's scheme had failed to attract any applicants. The Group observed that all the schemes were different, with each council tailoring its scheme to match its own objectives. The Group considered the research helped in identifying the criteria which needed to be addressed in designing a BR relief scheme for Bracknell Forest, which was of use to us when formulating our proposals for a discretionary BR relief scheme.
- 4.54 Having discussed the key objectives and principles of BR discretionary relief at its meeting on 30 September, the Group met on **28 October 2014** to consider officers' worked-up proposals for a discretionary BR relief scheme. We decided to seek comments on the practicability of our proposals from the representatives of the business community the Group had met, without raising expectations unduly.

Production of the Working Group's Report

- 4.55 On 28 October, the Group had a discussion on our emerging conclusions and recommendations, to inform the production of the draft report of the Group's review. The Group met for the last time on **24 November**, when – in consultation with Executive Members and officers - it considered and agreed its draft report, for presentation to the O&S Commission.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

From its investigations, the Working Group (the Group) has drawn the following conclusions, on which we have based a number of recommendations to the Executive. As our recommendations spread across the portfolios of three Executive Members, we are addressing the report in its entirety to the Leader of the Council.

General

- 5.1 This has been an interesting review. In addition to reviewing the Council's performance in a very important function for the first time, our main reason for having the review was initially to seek assurance that the government's part-localisation of Business Rates (BR) had not disadvantaged Bracknell Forest. However, as it was soon apparent that the changeover had been uneventful, our attention switched mainly to whether the Council should take the opportunity of exercising its new statutory powers to grant discretionary relief for BR.
- 5.2 Our overall conclusions are that:
- a) The Council is performing very well in its collection of Business Rates;
 - b) There is a growing problem nationally of BR avoidance schemes, which is beyond the Council's control, and which is serving to significantly reduce BR income for this Council and others;
 - c) There is a strong case to introduce a discretionary BR relief scheme, which we are confident will give enhanced income in the longer term, and which will directly help to develop our local economy. To be effective, it is essential that this forms part of a wider package of support to business.

The Importance of The Business Sector

- 5.3 Bracknell Forest benefits from - and is very much dependent on - large businesses paying rates. The top 20 ratepayers alone effectively finance a significant part of the Council's public services, besides providing employment for many residents and creating the wealth which the nation needs. We warmly welcome the greatly enhanced attention being given to this important stakeholder group by the Council, through its Business and Enterprise Service.

Small Business Rate Relief

- 5.4 The Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) scheme is of very clear benefit to small businesses, and the cost of such relief is borne by central government, not the Council. We were concerned to hear that the take-up rate was low, at some 50-60% nationally. **We recommend that efforts are made to ascertain the rate of take up of Small Business Rates relief in Bracknell Forest, and if similarly low to the national average, to publicise the availability of this valuable relief scheme more widely.**
- 5.5 The Group was concerned that the SBRR scheme was currently due to end in April 2015, though the expectation was that the government will extend it again. As its removal would be harmful to small businesses, we would have suggested this be pursued with central Government. However, that will not now be necessary as in the December 2014 Autumn statement the Chancellor announced a continuation of the relief arrangements.

Appeals Against Business Rates

- 5.6 The value of BR income at stake in pending appeals cases is substantial and therefore of some concern. However, there is nothing the Council can do about these appeals, as they are between businesses and the Valuation Office Agency over the rateable value of properties. Furthermore, the BR remains payable during the course of the appeal process, which can be very drawn out.

The Council's Performance on Business Rates

- 5.7 The evidence we have seen, including comparator information with other councils leads us to conclude that the Council is collecting BR efficiently and effectively with little practical room for any improvement. Arrears are being managed assiduously. The only area of concern is the huge loss of income arising from avoidance schemes.

Business Rates Avoidance Schemes

- 5.8 The Group was concerned about the increased proliferation of BR avoidance schemes beyond the Council's control. This is a national problem, and is serving to prevent the Council charging BR on a growing number of empty commercial properties, therefore adding to the financial pressures facing the Council. As this seems to arise from inadequacies in the legislation around BR, **we recommend that the Executive looks for opportunities – perhaps through the Local Government Association, and possibly directly to Government Ministers – to stress to central government the significance of Business Rates avoidance, and the need for early resolution.**
- 5.9 One particular means of avoidance is when organisations deliberately delay the completion or redevelopment of a building. This can result in either the Valuation Office Agency applying a zero rateable value, or the Council deciding it would not be appropriate to include the property on the BR rating list, on the grounds that the building is not deemed to be sufficiently fit for occupation. The effect of this is that no BR can be levied on the property. We took legal advice on whether the Council would be able to use its planning powers to set (in planning conditions) completion dates for business premises' building construction and renovation schemes where possible, to guard against BR avoidance. We were disappointed to learn that this would not be permissible, for two reasons. Firstly, the Department of Communities and Local Government do not allow such conditions to be imposed. Secondly, it would be an improper purpose for the exercise of planning powers (and therefore it would be unlawful) to be used in order to maximise the payment of Business Rates; Planning powers can only be used for Planning purposes.

Discretionary Business Rates Relief scheme

- 5.10 Due to new statutory powers, the Council has the opportunity to have a discretionary BR relief scheme. A large part of the Working Group's time was spent on gathering information and views on whether a discretionary BR relief scheme would be worthwhile in Bracknell Forest, and in designing a suitable scheme. We have concluded that a suitably designed scheme would be a wise investment yielding a clear and enduring return in the longer term. The scheme would increase the Council's income from Business rates in the medium to long term, as well as immediately benefitting the local economy and increasing employment opportunities in the Borough.

5.11 As with all 'spend to save' measures, discretionary BR relief would require possibly^{*} forgoing BR income in the early stages, but we consider the prospective benefits – in terms of economic development, reducing the extensive empty commercial building space, and long term financial gains - make this a very worthwhile prospect. Based on our research and consultations, **we recommend that the draft scheme at Appendix 2, along with further considerations and details at Appendix 3, are put forward by the Executive for consideration as part of the forthcoming 2015-16 budget proposals to Council.** The success of the discretionary relief scheme will require effective partnership working, with external partner organisations (such as the FSB and Chamber of Commerce), with commercial organisations (such as letting agents), and between Council departments (particularly the Business and Enterprise Service in the Chief Executive's Office, and the Revenue Services team in the Corporate Services department).

Marketing and Promotion of the Discretionary Scheme

5.12 The Working Group recognises that the take up of the proposed BR scheme by businesses might be slow and difficult to achieve, hence the importance of good marketing. However, as the overall budget for the scheme is likely to be modest, it is hoped to achieve adequate marketing without purchasing bought-in marketing support or campaigns. **We recommend to the Executive Members for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection; and Economic Development and Regeneration that there should be effective promotion of the proposed discretionary BR scheme.** We consider that the marketing of the scheme should be coordinated by the BES team, which should promote this scheme through their mainstream promotional activity of business support, including the Local Business Partnership (LBP). This could be supplemented, for example by:

- further publicity from the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses, both of whom were very supportive of the prospective BR relief scheme when the Working Group met their representatives;
- targeted marketing to innovation centres, letting agents, and other 'conduits' to small businesses;
- assistance and advice from the Council's Communications and Marketing team, for example on the Council's website and in 'Town and Country';
- publicity in the annual mailing of business rates demands.

In the event that take-up does not occur at a sufficient level, further consideration can be given to a professional marketing campaign.

^{*} It would not definitely forgo income, as the scheme seeks a declaration from applicants that they would not occupy the vacant premises without the discretionary rate relief (and there are limitations on the councils' powers to levy rates on vacant properties).

6. Glossary

BES	Business and Enterprise Service
BFC / 'The Council'	Bracknell Forest Council
BR	Business Rates
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
EU	European Union
FSB	Federation of Small Businesses
GLA	Greater London Authority
IRRV	The Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation
LBC	London Borough Of Croydon
LBP	Local Business Partnership
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
OI	Oxford Innovation Ltd
O&S	Overview and Scrutiny
SBRR	Small Business Rate Relief
SME	Small and Medium size Enterprises
'The Group'	The Working Group of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission
TV	Thames Valley

BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
MAY 2014

WORK PROGRAMME 2014 – 2015

Terms of Reference for

BUSINESS RATES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP

Purpose of this Working Group / anticipated value of its work:

1.	To build Members' understanding of the main factors affecting income from Business Rates (BR) in Bracknell Forest, including BR avoidance schemes
2.	To scrutinise the Council's performance on appeals cases and the collection of BR arrears
3.	To explore how the Council might make innovative use of BR to bring unoccupied buildings into use, and to stimulate economic development

Key Objectives:

1.	To gather and review information on the nature of BR and the range of businesses it applies to, with particular reference to Bracknell town centre regeneration
2.	To learn about the BR avoidance schemes being used in the borough, and how they might be combated
3.	The success rate on BR appeals, how appeals might be reduced, and the cost of handling appeals
4.	To gather and review information on the extent of unoccupied office/retail/industrial space
5.	To research the experience of other councils on discretionary BR relief schemes, to gather the views of business representatives, and then to consider recommending a BR relief scheme which is affordable and supportive of economic development in the Borough, with reference to particular sectors and areas.

Scope of the work:

The Business Rates function within the Council

Not included in the scope:

Anything unrelated to Business Rates

Terms of Reference prepared by: R M Beaumont

Terms of Reference agreed by: The Working Group

Working Group structure: Councillors Angell, Heydon, Leake and Virgo

Working Group Lead Member: Councillor Angell

Portfolio Holder: Councillors Ward (re Finance), McCracken (re Corporate services) and Brunel-Walker (re Economic Development and Town Centre regeneration)

BACKGROUND:

1.	There has not been an Overview and Scrutiny review of Business rates (BR) previously. BR are a very major source of income to the Council (£74 million was collected in 2013/14). Nationally, there has been an increasing use of innovative BR avoidance schemes which affects income levels, and the Council's performance on collecting BR arrears is also important.
2.	The level of BR is also a significant factor for businesses deciding where to locate. Bracknell Forest has many unoccupied business premises and the Council has a new emphasis on promoting economic development. O&S could usefully explore the scope for using the new legal powers for councils to operate discretionary BR reliefs to support economic development, and to make recommendations to the Executive accordingly.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR THE PANEL TO ADDRESS:

Questions will be asked as necessary to address the key objectives above.

INFORMATION GATHERING:

Witnesses to be invited

Name	Organisation/Position	Reason for Inviting
Alan Nash Sarah Kingston	Borough Treasurer Revenue Services Manager BFC	For all details on Business rates in BFC
Councillors Ward, McCracken and Brunel-Walker	Executive Members, BFC	To discuss the Executive's plans regarding BR, and in due course the Working Group's provisional conclusions and recommendations
TBC	Representatives of Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses and Oxford Innovations	To obtain the business community's viewpoint on the scope for discretionary BR reliefs
TBC	Representative of another local authority which has introduced a BR discretionary relief scheme	To learn about the practical experience of a BR discretionary relief scheme elsewhere
Victor Nicholls Robert Jolley	Assistant Chief Executive Team Manager, Business and Enterprise BFC	To explore how the Council might make innovative use of BR to bring unoccupied buildings into use, and to stimulate economic development; with particular reference to the regeneration of Bracknell town centre

Site Visits

Location	Purpose of visit
None	(unless the meeting with another council needs to be held at their offices)

Key Documents / Background Data / Research

1.	Key metrics for Business rate billings, collections, arrears, and appeals
2.	Localism Act 2011 S.69 and any related DCLG guidance
3.	Details of BR avoidance schemes
4.	Other council's discretionary BR relief schemes

TIMESCALE

Starting: May 2014

Ending: November 2014

OUTPUTS TO BE PRODUCED

1. Building Members understanding of the main factors affecting income from Business Rates (BR) in Bracknell Forest,
2. A report with recommendations to the Council's Executive

REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Body	Date
Overview and Scrutiny Commission	20 November 2014

MONITORING / FEEDBACK ARRANGEMENTS

Body	Details	Date
Overview and Scrutiny Commission	Progress reports on Working Group's review	At each meeting of the Commission, next on 10 July

PROPOSED DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS RATES RELIEF SCHEME: GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

Purpose of The Scheme

The discretionary Business Rate Relief Scheme aims to encourage expanding small businesses to occupy empty commercial buildings in Bracknell Forest and as a result

- Create job opportunities for local people
- Improve the physical image of the Borough and promote business confidence by having lower levels of vacant premises
- Through increased occupation of commercial properties, to increase Council income from business rates in the medium and long term, helping to reduce the burden on Council Tax payers

How Long Does The Scheme Run For?

Bracknell Forest Council ('The Council') reserves the right to terminate the scheme at any time. The Council needs to see evidence that the scheme is successfully meeting its purpose before it could consider making a long-term commitment to the scheme. The Council currently intends that the scheme will run from 1 April 2015 to at least 31 March 2018, subject to annual review. Businesses can apply at any time but can only benefit from the relief up until the end of the programme.

Which Businesses Are Eligible?

The relief scheme is not available to:

- a) businesses with outstanding debts owing to any local authority
- b) charities, community sports clubs, or non-profit making bodies
- c) betting and other gambling businesses, sex or pornography shops, nor pay day loan companies,
- d) any other business which, exceptionally, the Council considers might bring the scheme into disrepute.

Eligibility is confined to small businesses which:

- a) Are independent UK companies, i.e. not a subsidiary of a larger company
- b) Have fewer than 25 employees at the time of application (the Council welcomes an increase in employee numbers after the application)
- c) Within the last three months took , or are committed to take within the next three months, occupation of first-time or larger commercial premises with a rating account in Bracknell Forest; and
- d) The premises have a rateable value of at least £6,000 annually.

Relief will cease to be given in the event that the commercial premises occupied by the applicant at the outset of the relief are vacated.

Are There Limits on How Much Assistance Businesses Will Receive?

In order to ensure the Council does not over-spend its available resources, the total relief offered to all eligible businesses will not be allowed to exceed £250,000 in any one financial

year. Any applications for relief which are received in excess of that amount will not be accepted but can be re-submitted after 1 April following.

In order to comply with European Union rules on State Aid, applicants must confirm that the amount of relief, when added to other public financial assistance, will not in total exceed €200,000 or £130,000 within the last three years (the State Aid 'de minimis' threshold).

The scheme is aimed at assisting small businesses with their expansion in the early stage, but not to offer a permanent subsidy. Successful applicants will receive 100% relief from business rates in the 12 months following approval of their application, reducing to 50% relief in the second year, and no relief thereafter.

The discretionary relief is in addition to mandatory reliefs, subject to the total reliefs not exceeding 100% of the business rates due on the occupied property.

How Will Businesses Receive the Relief?

The relief will be paid over as a credit to a business's business rate account with the Council at the time the rates are normally payable.

Will Businesses Be Required to Repay the Relief?

The relief will only be repayable in the event that:

- Any information provided by the applicant is found to have been materially inaccurate; or
- the commercial premises occupied by the applicant at the outset of the relief are vacated within three years from the commencement of the relief, in which case the applicant will be liable to repay the relief on a pro-rata basis relating to the unexpired part of the three year term. For example, if the premises ceased to be occupied after two years, the business would have to repay 1/3 of the relief previously given.

Is there a right to appeal?

As this is a discretionary scheme, there is no statutory right to appeal if, for example, an application for relief is turned down, or previously paid relief is recovered by the Council. However, if you have any concerns we would encourage you to contact the Business and Enterprise team, and you do have access to the Council's complaints process.

Where can I go For Further Information?

Please contact the Business and Enterprise team at Business.enterpriseservice@bracknell-forest.gov.uk or by telephone on 01344 352000

How Do Businesses Apply For Discretionary Business rate Relief?

Please complete the application form, and send it with the information specified on the form to:

Business and Enterprise Manager
Bracknell Forest Council
Easthampstead House
Town Square
Bracknell RG12 1AQ
Business.enterpriseservice@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL – PROPOSED DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS RATES RELIEF SCHEME: APPLICATION FORM

This form must be completed if a business wishes to apply for discretionary rate relief on a property within Bracknell Forest. A separate application form is required for each property within the Council’s area.

Please provide the following information:

1. The name of the business, contact address and telephone number of the applicant.
2. The address of the property in Bracknell Forest for which you are claiming relief (if different from 1 above), and the floor area in square feet.
3. Is the organisation registered with the Charity Commission?
4. What are the organisation’s main objectives and purposes?
5. What activities take place on the premises?
6. How many employees does the business have?
7. Business rates reference number of the premises (if known)
8. If moving to larger premises, the floor space of premises at the previous business address (sq. ft.)

Declarations

I declare that:

- I do not have any outstanding debts with any local authority
- The information given on this form is, to the best of my knowledge, accurate and complete.
- The business would not occupy/ have occupied the new premises without discretionary rate relief
- The amount of relief, when added to other public financial assistance, will not in total exceed €200,000 or £130,000 within the last three years
- I will notify the Council immediately if the business ceases to occupy the premises above
- I undertake that the business will repay any relief on a pro rata basis in the event the premises are vacated within three years of receiving the relief

Signature:

Capacity in which signed:

Date:

PLEASE SEND US THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION WHEN YOU RETURN THIS FORM. YOUR APPLICATION CANNOT BE CONSIDERED WITHOUT THESE DOCUMENTS:

1. A copy of your tenancy/leasehold agreement or other evidence of planned occupation of commercial premises

Please send your application with all information requested attached to:

Business and Enterprise Manager
Bracknell Forest Council
Easthampstead House
Town Square
Bracknell RG12 1AQ
Business.enterpriseservice@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Appendix 3

BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL – PROPOSED DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS RATES RELIEF SCHEME: COMMENTARY

Background

1. Comments on the ‘Guidance for Applicants’ and the application form at Appendix 2 , together with consideration of other issues concerning the design and operation of the scheme are below.

Purpose of The Scheme

2. The scheme is aimed at helping to deliver three of the Council’s Medium Term Objectives:

MTO 1 *Regenerate Bracknell town centre* [by encouraging businesses to occupy empty commercial space across the Borough]

MTO 9 *Sustain the economic prosperity of the borough* [by encouraging business growth and inward investment, and the creation of new job opportunities. Reduced bills to business may potentially lead to further investment delivering increased employment.]

MTO 11 *To deliver value for money* [filling empty commercial premises will generate increased Business rates income and help to reduce the scope for BR avoidance].

A Simple Scheme or an Elaborate Scheme?

3. There is a balance to be struck between having an elaborate/ targeted scheme or ‘keeping it simple’. A targeted scheme should deliver better results with minimal wastage, but it would be more complex and costly to administer (any administrative costs would fall upon the Council), and would be more likely to give rise to anomalies and appeals. Conversely, a simple scheme might lead to some relief being granted needlessly and achieving no net benefit for the Borough. The Working Group consider that, on balance, the scheme should be reasonably simple, to help businesses understand it and therefore increase their engagement with it. Nevertheless, the Council should endeavour to be confident the Scheme will ‘make a difference’, by requiring applicants to declare that without the relief, they would not take occupation of their new premises; and that declaration should be reviewed by the Business and Enterprise Service (BES) team.

4. A related issue is that, based on what we have learnt about other council’s schemes, a BR relief on its own would probably be less effective than if it is part of a package of economic development support measures. The Working Group does not consider the BR relief scheme should be delayed until the full array of Bracknell Forest’s Business and Enterprise support measures are in place. Instead, by having the BR relief applications addressed to the Business and Enterprise team, that team will have the opportunity of seeing what other forms of support might be relevant to the particular business’s needs.

How Long Does The Scheme Run For?

5. The timing of the scheme needs to take into account:

- That the next BR re-basing should occur in 2020, and if the precedent set in 2013 is followed, that will be based on the business rate income in the previous three years.

Depressing the BR base in the run-up to 2020 could therefore be of financial benefit to the Council in the longer term.

- The initial duration of the scheme needs to be of sufficient length to give prospective applicants some certainty over getting BR relief.
- Until practical experience of the scheme has been gained, and so as not to over-commit future years' budgets, it would be unwise to have an open-ended commitment to the scheme's continuation.
- The likelihood that the construction activity in Bracknell town centre is likely to be at its height in 2015-17.

Which Businesses Are Eligible?

6. The Working Group believes that the scheme would be of greatest benefit if it is aimed at small businesses. The Group was told that larger businesses do not regard BR to be a determining factor in their decisions on location or investment, furthermore the resources likely to be available for the scheme would be insufficient to 'sway' a large business; also a larger amount of assistance to an individual business would possibly exceed the EU State Aids limit. An additional consideration of aiming the scheme at small businesses is that it might encourage the occupation of large empty commercial buildings through them being turned into multi-occupancy innovation centres, possibly through direct partnership working.

7. The Working Group also considers that the eligibility should be equal across the Borough, and not be confined – for example – to Bracknell town centre. A large part of Bracknell town centre is likely to be occupied by store chain shops and restaurants, which are unlikely to be influenced by a BR relief scheme. Also, evidence given to the Group points to many small businesses not being 'location-specific'.

8. The Working Group considers that some types of business – such as pay day loan shops – would be inappropriate to support and the Council should retain the right to exceptionally decline to grant relief if there is a risk of bringing the scheme into disrepute. These exclusions might give rise to complaints.

Are There Limits on How Much Assistance Businesses Will Receive?

9. The Working Group considers that an annual budget ceiling should be set for the scheme, as it needs to be affordable. The ceiling should be regularly reviewed in the light of take-up and increased BR income arising from businesses occupying new premises. For the scheme to make a difference, the ceiling needs to be sufficient to be meaningful, perhaps £250,000 annually. It is estimated that, depending on the type of building attracting relief, this relief would result in the occupation of some 3,500 square metres (37,700 square feet) of currently vacant commercial building space. The budget limit on the total reliefs each year might have a negative impact, in that there is risk that very worthwhile applications might be turned away solely because the ceiling had been reached, whereas less valuable applications may have been previously approved. In the long term, the increased BR income from properties that would otherwise have been empty/generating no BR should outweigh the on-going cost of reliefs, and this should be monitored by the BR team.

10. The Council has no discretion concerning the EU State Aid limits. Legal officers have advised that it will suffice to meet the EU requirement by requiring a declaration from applicants – there is no need for the Council to verify such declarations.

11. The scheme provides for BR relief to be tapered off over time, to encourage the company not to depend on the assistance – which is aimed at helping businesses cope

initially with the upsurge in fixed costs arising from occupying new/larger commercial premises.

Will Businesses Be Required to Repay the Relief?

12. The Working Group considers that, in order to combat abuse and to achieve value for money, a pro-rata claw-back provision should apply if a business withdraws from premises within three years of obtaining BR relief. The BR team could spot this if the company ceased paying BR on the property. In practice, enforcement is likely to be unachievable in some cases, particularly if a business has failed.

Governance & Administration

13. The scheme will require Council approval.

14. The operation of the scheme will require an administrative process. This will need to be as streamlined as possible but will need to include processes for application, review and approval, payment, monitoring, review, reporting, complaints handling and claw back. This will require sufficient officer capacity. The Working Group considers that responsibility for operating the scheme should be shared between the BES and BR teams; the details to be worked out if the scheme is approved.

Scheme Review

15. The scheme should be reviewed annually to determine how effective it has been and whether it should be amended in the light of practical experience.

For further information on the work of Overview and Scrutiny in Bracknell Forest, please visit our website on <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/scrutiny> or contact us at:

Overview and Scrutiny, Chief Executive's Office, Bracknell Forest Council, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG12 1AQ, or email us at overview.scrutiny@bracknell-forest.gov.uk or telephone the O&S Officer team on 01344 352283

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**TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
29 JANUARY 2015**

RESIDENTS SURVEY 2014 RESULTS Director of Corporate Services

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To brief the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on the Residents Survey 2014 results and note the communications plan.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **Note the Resident Survey 2014 results report at Annex One, the statistical comparison table at Annex Two and the communications plan at Annex Three**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide the Overview and Scrutiny Commission with the results of the Residents Survey 2014, to ensure that these are communicated effectively and that the Council acts on residents' views to continually improve the way it operates.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Introduction

- 5.1 As an outcome of the 2011 Neighbourhood Engagement Review the Executive agreed that the Council would conduct a biennial residents' survey of all households to ensure that adult residents' views continue to shape the Council's strategy and that the Council remains informed of residents' perceptions of its services. Surveys of younger residents are undertaken separately by Children, Young People and Learning with the latest research having been conducted by The Children's Society in 2013. The results can be found at: <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/bracknellforestchildrenandyoungpeoplespartnership>. This report outlines the findings of the 2014 Residents Survey conducted by QA Research, the Council's provider of independent consultation and engagement services. The aim of the survey was to gather the views of a representative number of Bracknell Forest residents on a variety of issues relating to the Council as well as attitudes towards Bracknell Forest as a place to live and work.
- 5.2 The Council has previously conducted a number of residents' surveys. These include neighbourhood surveys undertaken in 2007, 2008 and 2009 in partnership with Thames Valley Police to inform the work of the Neighbourhood Action Groups. The Place Survey was also conducted in 2008, with a central Government designed methodology and set of questions. The Council's 2014 Survey was based upon the

2012 Residents Survey which incorporated some questions from both the Place Survey and the Council's neighbourhood surveys so comparisons could be made and trends tracked over time.

Methodology

- 5.3 Previously in 2012, QA Research undertook a large scale postal survey, distributed to approximately 48,000 households. Although the survey achieved a high participation rate the method offered no guarantee of a representative sample as self-completion surveys are self-selecting. In 2012 respondents aged over 55 were over-represented whilst those aged 16-24 were underrepresented.
- 5.4 In 2014 QA Research undertook a sample survey of 1,800 residents carried out as a telephone survey using a CATI (Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing) approach. The interviewing period ran from 24 September to 4 November 2014, and CATI calls were made from QA's in-house contact centre in York. QA purchased a database of random telephone numbers in Bracknell Forest with which to make the calls, as well as a targeted database of younger and BME respondents in order to boost the response from these demographic groups. Quotas were set on ward, age, gender, and ethnicity to ensure the final sample was representative and reflected the demographic profile of the borough.
- 5.5 As the CATI calls progressed it became clear that BME groups were underrepresented in the sample and in order to ensure a better response rate from this demographic group, several days of face-to-face interviewing took place on-street at various locations through the borough to boost the number of completions from BME respondents.
- 5.6 At end of the fieldwork period a total of 1,811 surveys had been completed, of which 1,699 were CATI interviews and 112 face-to-face interviews. Telephone and face-to-face surveys were combined into a single data set for analysis and all are included in QA's report at Annex One. QA Research have analysed the differences in responses between residents from different demographic groups and wards, as well as understanding the changes in residents' perceptions over time where relevant.

Key findings

- 5.7 A copy of the QA Research results report is attached at Annex One and it includes a copy of the survey as an appendix. Attached at Annex Two is a statistical comparisons table which compares the 2014 Residents Survey results for key Council performance indicators to those of 2012. Due to differences in question ordering and overall questions content comparisons between surveys should be taken as indicative only.

Unrestricted

The headline results are as follows:

Summarised responses	2008 or 2009	2012	2014
Can influence decisions in their locality	28%	30%	49%
Participate in regular volunteering (monthly)	21%	28%	20%
Satisfied with local area as place to live	83%	85%	87%
Like best – parks and open spaces	61%	58%	42%
Like best – access to nature	63%	50%	30%
Like best – sports and leisure facilities		23%	16%
Believe people from different backgrounds get on well together	82%	87%	94%
People in the area not treating one another with respect and consideration is a problem	30%	14%	13%
Satisfied with the way the Council runs things	50%	60%	65%
Council offers value for money	35%	55%	59%
Very well or fairly well informed by the Council	39%	64%	64%

Due to differences in question ordering and overall questions content comparisons between surveys should be taken as indicative only.

Demographic Profile of respondents

- 5.8 The report at Annex One provides a full breakdown of the respondents by demographic profile and ward area in section 5.1. In comparison to the 2011 Census data the respondent profile more representative of the profile of Bracknell Forest than previous surveys – one of the key aims for the change in methodology.

Involvement and Influence over local decisions

- 5.9 Residents were asked a question about whether they felt they could influence decisions in their local area. 49% of respondents agreed they could influence decisions in their local area, compared with 30% in 2012 and 28% who agreed with this statement in the Place Survey in 2008. White respondents were more likely to disagree that they could influence decision compared to BME respondents. BME respondents were more likely to respond that they 'don't know' suggesting a continued lack of awareness amongst this group about how they can influence decisions that affect their local area. Respondents aged 35 and over were significantly more likely to disagree that they could influence decisions which stands in contrast to 2012. A lower proportion of respondents indicated that they 'don't know' how to influence decisions since 2012 (10% vs. 17%) but of these the highest proportion were aged under 34. Follow up work to raise awareness of how to get involved in decision making could be needed with young people and those from BME groups.
- 5.10 Residents were asked to state if they regularly participated in 'formal' volunteering; 20% indicated that they give unpaid help at least once a month, this compares to 28% in the 2012 Residents' Survey. The Community of Life Survey found that 29% of respondents undertook formal volunteering in 2012-13 and 27% in 2013-14 suggesting that the rate of formal volunteering is declining nationally. This data shows a significant decrease in volunteering since 2012 in Bracknell Forest.

However older people were overrepresented in the 2012 survey respondents which may have overinflated the volunteering figure as older age groups are significantly more likely to volunteer at least once a month than younger age groups. The proportion of respondents volunteering has decreased across all age groups.

Residents' attitudes towards their local area

- 5.11 The majority of residents 87% indicated they were satisfied with the local area as a place to live, with just 5% indicating they were dissatisfied. This is a slight increase on the 2012 Residents' Survey result where 85% of residents indicated that they were satisfied with the local area as a place to live. There was a large level of association between satisfaction with the local area as a place to live and with agreement by respondents that:
- they were able to influence decisions
 - their local area was a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together
 - the Council provided value for money
 - they were satisfied with the way that the Council runs things.
- 5.12 Satisfaction was slightly higher amongst those aged 35 – 44 when compared to other age groups. Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live was highest among residents in Winkfield and Cranbourne, Ascot, Central Sandhurst, Warfield Harvest Ride and Crowthorne. It was lowest in Wildridings and Central and Great Hollands South.
- 5.13 Respondents were asked to state the three things they liked best about living in the borough; the top answers were 'parks and open spaces' (42%), 'access to nature' (30%) and the 'sports and leisure facilities' (16%). These responses are similar to those in the 2012 Residents' Survey when 'parks and open spaces' (58%), 'access to nature' (50%), 'low level of crime' (34%) were also ranked most highly. Respondents in 2012 were prompted by a list of possible answers whereas the 2014 telephone interview including no prompting. There were a wide range of aspects mentioned by just over one-in-ten residents to this unprompted question indicating there are many aspects of living in the borough that residents are pleased with including local infrastructure and environmental factors. The full list can be seen at section 5.3.2 of Annex One.
- 5.14 The survey demonstrates that levels of community cohesion remain high in the borough. In 2012 87% of respondents to the Residents' Survey felt that people from different backgrounds got on well together in the borough. In 2014 this has increased to 94%. One difference in the profile of 2014 and 2012 respondents is that the age profile of the 2014 sample is more representative of the borough, while the 2012 age profile was skewed towards older residents, reflecting the methodology. Consequently, differences in agreement for this measure by age and specifically a greater level of agreement amongst younger respondents might explain the higher level of agreement recorded in 2014. No such pattern is evident, confirming that this year-on-year increase in agreement is likely to be a true increase and not reflective of the change in methodology.
- 5.15 BME respondents were more likely than White British respondents to disagree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well with one another (9% vs. 4%). This is in contrast to the findings in 2012, where they were more likely to agree. Further analysis was undertaken and agreement that 'people

from different backgrounds get on well together' was consistent regardless of the proportion of White British and BME residents in the ward.

- 5.16 The majority of residents (85%) felt that there was little problem with people not treating each other with respect within their local area; a minority of residents (13%) considering this to be a problem. This is a slight improvement on the 2012 Residents' Survey where 14% found it to be a problem.

Use of and satisfaction with specific council services

- 5.17 The most frequently used Council services by respondents were 'recycling facilities' (86%) followed by 'parks and open spaces' (79%) and 'sport/leisure facilities' (50%). Age, and linked to this, life stage were important determinants of the services used by respondents. There were a number of differences in the services used by gender and age. There were minor variations between wards although the top three services used at least monthly for all wards came from just four service areas including those listed above and 'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre'; see section 5.4.1 of Annex One.
- 5.18 Respondents were asked to give their satisfaction levels with the services provided by the Council. Satisfaction levels were highest for 'parks and open spaces' (86%), 'kerbside recycling' (74%), 'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (73%) and 'Refuse collection' (73%). There were a high number of 'don't knows' for a number of these services. The high proportions of 'don't knows' relate to targeted services with relatively low usage figures such as 'childcare services' (82%), 'housing advice' (79%) and 'youth services' (78%).
- 5.19 Figure 23 in section 5.4.2 of Annex One illustrates the satisfaction levels with services once the 'don't knows' are excluded. The highest rated services remain similar but services such as 'planning' and 'road maintenance' appear lower down the chart. 32% of respondents expressing a rating for 'road maintenance' stated they were 'dissatisfied' with the service, 24% were dissatisfied with 'housing advice' and 19% were dissatisfied with the 'planning service'. Positively the level of satisfaction (excluding 'don't know') for the majority of services has significantly increased since 2012. Section 5.4.2 shows interesting variations in satisfaction levels by gender, age, ethnicity, religion and ward. The most frequently used services are also those that report the highest levels of satisfaction.

Perceptions of the Council overall

- 5.20 The satisfaction of residents with the Council was measured by a number of questions including overall satisfaction with the Council, perceptions of value for money offered by the Council and improvements the Council could make with the services it provides. Two thirds of respondents (65%) are satisfied with the way in which the Council is running things, with 15% indicating they were 'very satisfied'. Those that are dissatisfied are in the minority (11%), although more than a fifth (22%) were neither satisfied or dissatisfied. This is a significant increase since 2012 when 60% of residents indicated they were satisfied with the way the Council runs things and shows a reduction in the proportion of respondents that are dissatisfied with the way the Council runs things from 14% in 2012.
- 5.21 Overall satisfaction was significantly linked to belief that the Council offers good value for money therefore demonstrating value is crucial to continuing the improvement in satisfaction levels. Levels of satisfaction with the Council were also linked with other

key indicators such as satisfaction with local area as a place to live, how the Council runs things and their ability to influence decisions.

- 5.22 With regard to the value for money offered by the Council; 59% of residents indicated that they thought the Council offers value for money, 10% disagree and a quarter (25%) neither agreed nor disagreed. This is a significant increase in the proportion that agreed that the Council offers value for money since 2012 when 52% agreed and more specifically the proportion indicating they 'strongly agree' also increased significantly from 8% in 2012 to 12% in 2014. Those who felt that they could influence decisions within their local area were also significantly more likely to agree that the Council provides value for money than those disagreeing (74% compared to 48%).
- 5.23 Residents were asked what if anything the Council could do differently that would have a positive impact within Bracknell Forest. The single issue mentioned most frequently by respondents was the need to focus on improving or changing road maintenance or infrastructure, mentioned by just under a fifth (19%). Improving or changing mechanisms for communicating with residents and acting on residents concerns (15%) and the need to focus on the regeneration of the town centre (14%) and return to weekly refuse collections (8%) were the next most popular answers as figure 32 in section 5.5.3 illustrates.
- 5.24 The most important areas residents wanted the Council to focus on was the need to improve or change road maintenance or infrastructure (19%), improve communication with residents and acting on residents' concerns (15%) and to focus on the regeneration of the town centre (14%).

Communication with the Council

- 5.25 Residents were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt informed about the Council and the services and benefits it provides. Just under two thirds (64%) of respondents felt at least 'fairly well informed' by the Council, with just under a third (31%) indicating they felt 'not very well informed' and one-in-ten respondents (9%) indicated they felt 'not well informed at all'. There has been no significant change since 2012 when 64% also felt at least 'fairly well informed' and 29% felt they were 'not informed' about local public services. There appears to be a polarisation of respondents with a significantly greater proportion feeling 'very well informed' in 2014 (16%) compared to 2012 (10%) but also a higher proportion feeling 'not well informed at all' (2014: 9%, 2012: 6%). Male respondents were more likely to feel well informed (67%) than female (62%) but unlike in 2012 there were no significant differences between demographic groups.
- 5.26 The most commonly used method for accessing information about the Council and its partners were leaflets and partnership publications through the post (56%), the Town and Country newsletter (47%) and local newspapers and radio (45%). Online was the fourth most common method for receiving information (35%); however it was the second most popular method for receiving information (37%). Social media's popularity as a method of communication with the Council also outstrips its current usage. Unsurprisingly these responses demonstrate a shift from traditional communication methods to an increased popularity of 'online' and 'social media' channels. This could also be linked to a greater proportion of younger respondents in the 2014 sample compared to 2012.
- 5.27 Both usage and preference for 'Town and Country newsletter' increased with age with the inverse the case for 'social media'. The youngest age group were almost

five times more likely to use social media compared to the oldest age group (24% vs. 5%). The youngest age groups' preference for social media was eleven times the level of preference amongst the oldest age group (33% vs. 3%). Those in the 65+ age range continue to be reliant on hard copy forms of information such as 'Town and Country the Council newsletter' (65%) and 'leaflets/partnership newsletters by post' (64%) compared to accessing information via digital means such as 'online' 28% and 'social media' 5%. The data suggests that online methods currently do not engage with the 16-24 age group as they had the greatest difference in levels of preference over usage.

- 5.28 White British respondents were shown to access significantly more sources of information on average than BME respondents. BME respondents also showed a significantly greater preference for 'local newspapers/radio' and 'face-to-face' compared to White British respondents but there was no significant difference in levels of usage by ethnicity. This indicates that there may be barriers to BMEs accessing information using these methods.
- 5.29 Residents were asked to indicate whether they had access to broadband internet at their home. The vast majority (94%) indicated that they did and only one-in-seventeen (6%) did not. This has increased since 2012 when 83% had broadband connection. This increase may be due to a more representative sample in 2014 as those aged 65 and over were significantly less likely to have broadband access so may have artificially decreased the 2012 figure. Access analysed by Ward mirrors the findings in 2012 with Priestwood and Garth having the lowest proportion of respondents with home broadband access (72%) and Warfield Harvest Ride remaining the highest (93%).

Contact with and awareness of Parish and Town Councils

- 5.30 Residents were asked if they had contacted their Town and Parish Council during the past year and if they were aware of the services provided by their Town and Parish Council. Only 18% of respondents had contacted their Parish or Town Council in the last year which is a significant decrease from 2012 when almost a third (30%) reported contact. Some of this decrease could be accounted for by the lower proportion of older respondents in the 2014 sample as respondents aged 35 and over are more likely to have contacted their Parish or Town Council. However a decline was recorded in comparison to 2012 amongst all age groups.
- 5.31 A wide range of differing reasons were offered for contacting a Town or Parish Council with no single over-riding issue driving contact. Two thirds (63%) of respondents indicated that their enquiry had been dealt with adequately. However one-in-three (33%) enquires had not been dealt with adequately with the respondent considering that the Parish or Town Council did not act to deal with the cause of the enquiry, either due to being 'unable to act' (16%) or 'refusing to act' (10%).
- 5.32 Nearly two thirds of respondents (62%) were not aware of the services provided by their Parish and Town Council which is a significant increase since 2012 where it was just over half (56%). The proportion of people who have contacted their Parish or Town Council has decreased and awareness of the services they provide has also decreased.
- 5.33 Of those that were aware of the services provided by Parish or Town Councils the majority (84%) were satisfied with a negligible proportion (3%) being dissatisfied.

- 5.34 Of those that were aware of the services provided by Parish and Town Councils, when asked about satisfaction with those services 'parks and open spaces' (33%), 'environmental maintenance' (14%) and 'leisure and sports facilities' (9%) were particularly good or valued services. There continues to be confusion amongst respondents about who is providing services as responses included services that were the responsibility of the borough whether in terms of satisfaction or areas for improvement. When asked over half of respondents (55%) did not name any Parish or Town Council services that required improvement. The list of suggestions can be found at Figure 47 in section 5.7.2 of Annex One.
- 5.35 Respondents were asked about their interest in contributing to a Neighbourhood Plan and if so, what they felt they could offer. Only a minority of respondents (27%) indicated they would be interested in participating. Respondents from Winkfield and Cranbourne (35%), Binfield with Warfield (34%), Crown Wood (34%) and Ascot (33%) had the highest level of interest in this activity. The wards where interest was lowest were Central Sandhurst (18%) and Old Bracknell (18%). The most common means of contributing was a 'keenness to share views and opinions' (32%).

Conclusions

- 5.36 Some care needs to be taken in interpreting the results of the survey and comparing them to those of previous surveys due to the differences in the survey methodology. However, overall the survey's results demonstrate there have been a number of significant positive changes since the last survey in 2012:
- **The change in methodology has provided a more representative sample and findings that are more reflective of the views of the borough.** The change from a postal survey, whereby respondents are entirely self-selecting, to a telephone survey designed to ensure a sample of respondents that better reflects the views of all demographic groups in the borough has been achieved.
 - **Residents continue to feel that Bracknell Forest is a good place to live and is getting better.** The majority of respondents 87% were satisfied with their local area as a place to live and there was a slight increase since 2012. Access to nature and green spaces were once again cited as the most valued features of living in Bracknell Forest and usage levels and satisfaction levels for parks and open spaces in particular remain comparatively high.
 - Residents agreed that there was strong community cohesion in their local area, and the proportion agreeing that people from different backgrounds get on well together where they live has increased significantly since 2012 (87% to 94%). There was also a low level of disagreement that people in the respondents' local area treated each other with respect and consideration, a slight decrease from 2012 (14% to 13%). These two measures were positively correlated with satisfaction with the local area, and these metrics are clearly linked.
 - **Around two-thirds expressed satisfaction with Bracknell Forest Council and the majority consider it provides value for money, with improvement in both measures recorded since 2012.** There was a strong correlation between residents' feelings of being informed and able to influence decisions and satisfaction with Council services. There has been little overall change since 2012. Effective community engagement, ensuring residents are able to influence decisions and feel informed about services drives up satisfaction.
 - **The services provided or supported by Bracknell Forest Council generate high levels of satisfaction overall, although there is the potential to improve some areas of service.** Positively the level of satisfaction (excluding 'don't know') for the majority of services has significantly increased since 2012. The most frequently used

services are also those that report the highest levels of satisfaction. The top options remain largely the same, with 'parks and open spaces' (86%) at the top and 'kerbside recycling' (74%), 'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (73%) and 'Refuse collection' (73%) still highly rated.

- **The majority of residents continue to feel they at least fairly well informed about Council services, although there has been no improvement since 2012.**

The most common methods of receiving information from the Council continue to be leaflets or partnership publications by post, the Town and County newsletter, and local newspapers or radio; however, the proportion using these has decreased significantly since 2012. In contrast, the proportion using and receiving information online and via social media has increased, and although preference for online communication continues to outstrip usage (suggesting improvements could be made) this gap has narrowed since 2012.

- **Contact with Parish or Town Councils has fallen since 2012 (30% to 18%).**
- **Although those who were aware of the services provided by Parish and Town Councils were satisfied with them, awareness remains low and is possibly decreasing.** Only one third of all respondents indicating that they were aware of what these services actually were.
- Interest in being involved in a formal Neighbourhood Plan was low, suggesting that residents may not want the level of involvement that helping to shape a Neighbourhood Plan would require.

5.37 A communications plan has been developed at Annex Three to feed back the results of the survey to residents, partners and the Council's elected members and staff. Feeding back to residents using the strap line 'you said: we did' will help demonstrate the Council's commitment to acting on the results of the survey and increase the likelihood of maintaining a high response rate when the next survey is conducted in 2016.

5.38 The survey results data will be summarised at ward level and circulated to Elected Members.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

6.1 Nothing to add to the report.

Borough Treasurer

6.2 There are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

6.3 The change in methodology from a self-selecting postal survey to a sample survey of 1,800 representative respondents conducted over the telephone and face to face has provided a more representative sample and findings that are more reflective of all the views of the borough's residents.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 Conducting a biennial resident survey enables the Council to manage risk 9.6 in the Council's Strategic Risk Register 'Pressure from stakeholders /residents to have local power/involvement'.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 The Corporate Management Team.

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Meeting on 17th December 2014.

Representations Received

- 7.3 Incorporated into this paper.

Background Papers

Bracknell Forest Residents Survey 2014 – QA Research Results Report

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Bracknell Forest Residents' Survey 2014

Bracknell Forest Council

05 December 2014



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This research has been carried out in compliance with the International standard ISO 20252, (the International Standard for Market and Social research), The Market Research Society's Code of Conduct and UK Data Protection law

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I. Executive Summary

- Qa Research conducted 1,811 interviews via telephone and face-to-face interviewing between 24 September and 4 November 2014 on behalf of Bracknell Forest Council for the 2014 Bracknell Forest Residents' Survey.
- The resulting data was representative of the profile of Bracknell Forest and has been compared to that of the 2012 residents survey (also conducted by Qa) to examine trends over time. At the 95% confidence level, findings are accurate to within +/- 2.3%.

Involvement and influence over local decisions

Respondents were asked how far they agreed or disagreed that they could influence decisions that affected their local area;

- Only two fifths (41%) agreed that they could influence decisions affecting their local area, an increase from 2012 (30%); half (49%) disagreed however
 - There was only minor variation by demographic subgroups and there is a general lack of agreement across the sample. Agreement was especially low in the wards of Binfield with Warfield (29%) and Wildridings and Central (27%).

Respondents were also asked about how often they gave unpaid help to groups, clubs or organisations over the past 21 months;

- The majority (72%) of respondents had not given any formal voluntary help over the last 12 months, and only one fifth (20%) participated in formal volunteering at least once a month. Although this is a significant decrease since 2012 (28% at least once a month), this is likely to be driven by a more representative sample in 2014, and the lower proportion of older respondents.

Residents' attitudes towards their local area

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with their local area as a place to live;

- The majority (87%) of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their local area as a place to live, and only one-in-twenty (5%) indicated any degree of dissatisfaction. This has not changed since 2012.
- Respondents were more likely to feel satisfied with their local area if they...
 - ...agreed (93%) that they could influence decisions affecting their local area (disagreed: 81%).
 - ...agreed (91%) that their local area was a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together (disagreed: 73%).
 - ...agreed (93%) that the Council provides value for money (disagreed: 65%).
 - ...were satisfied (93%) with the way the Council runs things (dissatisfied: 64%).
- The most frequently mentioned best aspects that respondents said they liked about the borough continue to relate to access to green spaces (parks and open spaces (42%) and access to nature (30%)). Sports and leisure facilities were the third most mentioned aspects (16%)

Respondents also indicated the extent to which people from different backgrounds get on together, and to which people in their local area treat each other with respect and consideration;

- The majority (94%) of respondents agreed that their local area was a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, and this has risen since 2012 (87%) and 2008 (82%)
 - The level of agreement was highest amongst those in the wards of Crowthorne (99%) and Crown Wood (99%).
- Only a small proportion (13%) of respondents indicated that the way people in their local area treated each other with respect and consideration was a problem, although this figure is essentially unchanged since 2012 (14%).
 - Around a fifth of respondents from Wildridings and Central (23%), Priestwood and Garth (22%), Great Hollands North (19%) and Great Hollands South (20%) felt that there was a problem with how people treated each other.

Use of and satisfaction with specific Council services

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they used specific council services and rate their level of satisfaction with those services;

- The services most frequently used on a monthly basis continue to be recycling facilities (86%) and parks and open spaces (79%).
 - These were the top two most used services in every ward, with sport/ leisure facilities or Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre being third.
- Amongst those who gave a satisfaction rating, the services that the highest proportion of respondents were satisfied with were parks and open spaces (89%) and Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre (87%).
 - Satisfaction with services tended to be higher amongst female respondents, BME respondents, and older respondents.
- Satisfaction in almost all services had increased significantly since 2012.
 - The increase in satisfaction was greatest for youth services (20% to 49%), childcare services (32% to 52%), and social care services (37% to 53%). To some degree, this will reflected the higher proportion of younger respondents in the 2014 research.

Perceptions of the Council overall

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the way that Bracknell Forest Council runs things;

- In total, almost two-thirds (65%) indicated that they were satisfied with the way the Council runs things, and only one-in-ten indicated that they were dissatisfied (11%). Satisfaction has increased significantly since 2012 (60%).
- Respondents were more likely to feel satisfied with the way the Council runs things if they...
 - agreed rather than disagreed that the Council provides value for money (87% vs. 16%)
 - agreed rather than disagreed that they can influence decisions affecting their area (81% vs. 52%)

Respondents then indicated how far they agreed that the Council provided value for money;

- The majority (59%) of respondents agreed that the Council provides value for money, and only one-in-ten (10%) disagreed. Agreement has increased significantly since 2012 (59% vs. 52%).

Respondents were then asked what they felt the Council could do differently which would have a positive impact within Bracknell Forest;

- In total, 72% suggested an improvement and the types of issues mentioned were in line with those mentioned in 2012.
- Respondents were most likely to make suggestions relating to the need to improve or change road maintenance or infrastructure (19%), and this has increased since 2012 (14%).
- Other frequently mentioned suggestions included improving communication with residents and acting on residents' concerns (15%) and to focus on regeneration of town centre (14%).

Communication with the Council

Respondents indicated the extent to which they felt informed about the services and benefits the Council provides and the methods used to communicate with the Council;

- Two thirds (64%) of respondents felt well informed, and just under one third (31%) felt not informed; this is essentially unchanged since 2012.
- The three most common methods for accessing information about services provided by the Council and its partners were leaflets / partnership publications by post (56%), the Town and Country newsletter (47%) and local newspapers / radio (45%). Usage of these methods has decreased since 2012.
- Preference for receiving council communication online still outstrips usage, although usage has increased since 2012. Those aged 16-24 had the second lowest usage of online information services despite having by far the highest usage and preference for social media, suggesting that online methods currently used may not engage with this age group.

Contact and satisfaction with Town and Parish Councils

Respondents were also asked about their contact with their Town and Parish Council, along with their awareness of the services they provide locally;

- The majority (80%) of respondents had not contacted their Parish or Town Council in the past 12 months; only just less than one fifth (18%) has done so. The level of contact has decreased since 2012, which may reflect the younger profile of respondents.
- A wide range of reasons led to contacting a Town or Parish Council and there was no single over-riding issue which drives contact.
- Where enquires were made, two thirds (63%) of respondents indicated that they were dealt with adequately. For the third (33%) whose enquires were not dealt with adequately this was generally due to the Council not acting to deal with the cause of the enquiry.
- Just over a third of respondents (35%) were aware of the local services provided by their Parish or Town Council, however the majority were still not aware (62%).

- The majority (84%) of respondents were satisfied with the services provided by their Parish or Town Council, and only a negligible proportion (3%) were dissatisfied. Sandhurst Town reported the highest satisfaction (89%) and Crowthorne Parish the lowest (77%).

Respondents were also asked about their interest in contributing to a Neighbourhood Plan;

- Only a minority of respondents (27%) indicated that they would be interested in the opportunity to participate in drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan in their area.
 - Male respondents (30%) and respondents aged 35-64 (35-44: 31%, 45-54: 31%, 55-64: 31%) were the most likely to be interested.
 - Respondents from Winkfield and Cranbourne (35%), Binfield with Warfield (34%), Crown Wood (34%) and Ascot (33%) had the highest level of interest in participating in drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan.

Conclusions

1. The change in methodology has provided a more representative sample and findings that are more reflective of the views of the borough.
2. Residents continue to feel that Bracknell Forest is a good place to live and is getting better.
3. Around two-thirds expressed satisfaction with Bracknell Forest Council and the majority consider it provides value for money, with improvement in both measures recorded since 2012.
4. The services provided or supported by Bracknell Forest Council generate high levels of satisfaction overall, although there is the potential to improve some areas of service.
5. The majority of residents continue to feel at least fairly well informed about Council services, although there has been no improvement since 2012.
6. Contact with Parish or Town Councils continues to be minimal and has actually fallen since 2012.
7. Although those who were aware of the services provided by Parish and Town Councils were satisfied with them, awareness remains low and is possibly decreasing.

2. Introduction

The following report summarises and analyses the findings of the 2014 Bracknell Forest Residents' Survey. This survey was conducted by Qa Research (Qa) and undertaken between September and November 2014. It sought to provide data on residents' quality of life and their attitudes towards local public services, including the Council.

The report details the aims and objectives of the research, the methodology utilised to collect the data, and the key findings arising from the survey.

Bracknell Forest Council regularly undertakes consultation with residents to understand views on specific local services and priorities for the local area. This iteration of the Residents' Survey follows the 2012 survey (also conducted by Qa), and where appropriate comparisons are made between the findings in 2014 and those in 2012. Note that comparisons between the 2014 data and data collected prior to 2012 have not been made in this report due to a methodological change, which is outlined in Section 4 below.

3. Aims and objectives

The survey was designed to gather the views of a representative sample of Bracknell Forest residents on a variety of issues relating to the Council, as well as attitudes towards Bracknell Forest as a place to live and work.

It was also intended to provide data that was, as far as possible, comparable to that collected in previous years so that comparisons could be made.

The main objectives of the research were therefore;

- To carry out a survey amongst a representative sample of Bracknell Forest residents, that provides robust data that can be compared over time
- To provide a methodology which encourages residents from all demographic groups to give their views in a cost-effective way
- To provide a robust sample of respondents from each of the 18 wards in Bracknell Forest.

In addition, one of the main objectives of the 2014 survey was as follows;

- To migrate the research from a postal based survey made available to all households in the borough, to a sample survey undertaken over the telephone, while at the same time ensuring that data are comparable year-on-year.

This report details findings from the 2014 research.

4. Methodology

Qa Research (Qa) was commissioned to undertake the 2014 Bracknell Forest Residents' Survey, and it was decided early on that there were two potential options for the data collection methodology. These were;

- A large scale postal survey, distributed to approximately 48,000 households in line with the method used to undertake the 2012 survey
- A sample survey of 1,800 respondents conducted over the telephone, with quotas to ensure a representative sample.

There were advantages to using both methods. The postal survey would give a larger overall sample and greater potential scope for analysis by sub-group. It would also allow maximum comparability with the data from 2012 as the method would be the same. However, this method offers no guarantee of a representative sample as self-completion surveys of this type are inherently self-selecting. This can be seen in the 2012 survey, where respondents aged over 55 were overrepresented and those aged 16-24 were underrepresented.

In contrast, a sample survey would provide a more representative sample at the overall level, by the use of quotas applied throughout the fieldwork process in order to ensure the achieved sample reflects the demographic profile of the borough. Crucially, a sample survey would allow the collection of much more descriptive and robust data despite the smaller sample size.

Consequently, a sample survey methodology was ultimately chosen for the 2014 survey, and this was carried out as a telephone survey using a CATI (Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing) approach.

The questionnaire used was based largely on the 2012 survey, albeit with some additional questions added and the language of some questions changed to be better communicated over the telephone. The questionnaire is provided as an annexe to this report.

The majority of questions within the survey were of a closed format; however there were a number of open questions. Verbatim responses to the open questions were 'coded' into various themes and groups of a similar nature, and subsequently reported upon in an aggregated format. Where this has occurred in the following report it has been highlighted.

The interviewing period ran from 24 September to 4 November 2014, and CATI calls were made from Qa's in-house contact centre in York. Qa purchased a database of random telephone numbers in Bracknell Forest with which to make the calls, as well as a targeted database of younger and BME respondents in order to boost the response from these demographic groups. Quotas were set on ward, age, gender, and ethnicity to ensure the final sample was representative.

As the CATI calls progressed it became clear that BME groups were underrepresented in the sample and that recruiting these respondents over the telephone was more challenging than anticipated. In order to ensure a better response rate from this demographic group, several days of face-to-face interviewing took place on-street at various locations through the borough to boost the number of completions from BME respondents.

At end of the fieldwork period a total of 1,811 surveys had been completed, of which 1,699 were CATI interviews and 112 face-to-face interviews. Telephone and face-to-face surveys have been combined into a single data set for analysis and all are included in this report.

Corrective weighting was applied to the data in order to ensure it was representative of the profile of Bracknell Forest. The weighting was applied to achieve the following;

- To re-align the proportion of interviews undertaken in each ward to the correct proportions – this was in response to the deliberate over and under-sampling of each ward which was designed to achieve around 100 interviews in each
- The demographic profile of each ward was weighted by age (16-29, 30-59, 60+), gender and ethnicity (White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British, BME) to ensure it matched the profile outlined in the 2011 Census
- The overall profile was weighted again by age (16-29, 30-59, 60+), gender and ethnicity (White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British, BME) to ensure it matched the profile outlined in the 2011 Census.

The data was analysed as overall (frequency) results and a series of cross tabulations created to explore any relationship between responses and age, gender, employment status, location and other factors. We have reported throughout where any significant statistical differences appear from our analysis of the data by various cross-tabulations. The key findings presented are statistically significant unless indicated otherwise. Using statistical rules, we can be 95% confident that our research findings have a potential variance of no more than plus or minus 2.3% from the figure shown. These standards specifically apply to 'confidence levels'. An explanation is provided below:

Confidence levels:

This indicates how representative findings are of the resident body as a whole. In this instance we have used 95% confidence levels – or put more simply– this requires that the chances of the sample group reflecting the wider resident population will be 95 out of 100. The confidence level is essentially a fixed value which must be looked at in conjunction with standard error.

The results are highlighted using a combination of charts and tables. In some instances responses to ordinal questions (such as satisfaction scales) have been combined to aid interpretation. Where this has occurred it has been highlighted within the report. Similarly, on some occasions responses have been converted into average (mean) scores.

Year-on-year comparisons;

Throughout this report comparisons are made between the data from the 2014 Residents' Survey and the 2012 iteration of the survey. These are highlighted in a blue box.

As previously outlined, there are key methodological differences between the 2014 and 2012 surveys and indeed between the 2014 survey and previous Residents' Surveys such as the Neighbourhood Survey and the Place Survey. Specifically, due to the self-selecting nature of a postal survey the data from 2012 is not representative of the demographic profile of the borough, with older respondents and female respondents being overrepresented at the expense of younger and male respondents. In contrast, the 2014 data provides a more representative sample of the borough's residents, despite the smaller overall sample size.

Therefore, year-on-year comparisons in this report have been limited to comparing 2014 data with 2012 data and where comparisons are made, the report details how any differences can be explained by differences in the respective sample profiles of the two surveys.

5. Key findings

5.1 Demographic profile of respondents

The following table breaks down the profile of respondents by age, gender, ethnicity and ward. The profile is compared to the most recent Census data for adults (aged 16 years and above) alongside the demographic profile of respondents to the 2012 survey.

As described in the methodology section (Section 4), the 2014 data has been weighted to ensure it is representative of the demographic profile of Bracknell Forest. Throughout this report, percentages and means reported from the 2014 data are based on the weighted data.

Figure 1. Profile of respondents by age, gender, ethnicity, and ward

	Census profile 2011 (16+ population only)		Respondent profile 2014 (Unweighted)		Respondent profile 2014 (Weighted)		Respondent profile 2012	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Age								
16-24	11,972	13%	188	10%	233	13%	41	1%
25-44	34,352	38%	468	26%	484	27%	1,162	21%
45-54	17,092	19%	461	25%	439	24%	943	17%
55-64	12,180	14%	397	22%	377	21%	1,060	19%
65+	14,147	16%	297	16%	278	15%	1,950	36%
Missing	-	-	-	-	-	-	290	5%
Gender								
Male	44,092	49%	880	49%	890	49%	2,292	42%
Female	45,651	51%	931	51%	921	51%	3,001	55%
Missing	-	-	-	-	-	-	153	3%
Ethnicity								
White	76,853	85%	1588	88%	1539	85%	4,590	84%
Black and minority ethnic	12,890	14%	209	12%	258	14%	183	3%
Missing	-	-	14	1%	14	1%	673	12%
Ward								
Ascot	4,435	5%	100	6%	89	5%	344	6%
Binfield with Warfield	6,881	8%	104	6%	139	8%	352	6%
Bullbrook	4,774	5%	104	6%	96	5%	225	4%
Central Sandhurst	4,061	5%	90	5%	82	5%	188	3%
College Town	5,090	6%	100	6%	103	6%	157	3%
Crown Wood	6,280	7%	99	5%	127	7%	318	6%
Crowthorne	4,247	5%	100	6%	86	5%	200	4%
Great Hollands North	4,335	5%	95	5%	87	5%	213	4%
Great Hollands South	3,992	4%	100	6%	81	4%	250	5%
Hanworth	6,489	7%	102	6%	131	7%	382	7%
Harmans Water	6,288	7%	105	6%	127	7%	314	6%
Little Sandhurst & Wellington	4,532	5%	96	5%	91	5%	204	4%
Old Bracknell	4,402	5%	97	5%	89	5%	204	4%
Owlsmoor	4,081	5%	100	6%	82	5%	170	3%
Priestwood & Garth	6,054	7%	103	6%	122	7%	247	5%
Warfield Harvest Ride	6,053	7%	118	7%	122	7%	301	6%
Wildridings & Central	3,764	4%	101	6%	76	4%	176	3%
Winkfield & Cranbourne	3,985	4%	97	5%	80	4%	151	3%
Missing	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,050	19%
Total	89,743		1,811		1,811		5,446	

All 2011 census figures are based on the adult (aged 16 and over) population only

Unlike the data from 2012, in which females, white, and older respondents are overrepresented, the 2014 data is much closer to the profile of Bracknell Forest – one of the key aims for the change of methodology.

There has been a particular rise in representation of the youngest age group (16-24) and Black and minority ethnic (BME) respondents, even before the weighting of the data increased the proportion of those groups in the sample.

The table below shows the profile of respondents by religious beliefs.

Figure 2. Profile of respondents by religion

	Census profile 2011 (16+ population only)		Respondent profile 2014 (Unweighted)		Respondent profile 2014 (Weighted)		Respondent profile 2012	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
None	24,459	27%	592	33%	616	34%	857	16%
Net: Any religion/belief	65,284	73%	1,219	67%	1,194	66%	2,892	53%
Christian (all denominations)	55,691	62%	1,024	57%	994	55%	2,732	50%
Buddhist	678	1%	10	1%	14	1%	22	<1%
Hindu	1,331	1%	32	2%	26	1%	26	<1%
Muslim	884	1%	20	1%	26	1%	12	<1%
Sikh	345	<1%	4	<1%	4	0%	8	<1%
Jewish	154	<1%	5	<1%	5	0%	10	<1%
Other	445	<1%	83	5%	85	5%	82	2%
Missing	5,756	6%	41	2%	40	2%	1,697	31%
Total	89,743		1,811		1,811		5,446	

All 2011 census figures are based on the adult (aged 16 and over) population only

The following table describes the sexual orientation of respondents. There is no comparative data in the 2011 Census, as that survey does not collect this information.

Figure 3. Profile of respondents by sexuality

	Census profile 2011 (16+ population only)		Respondent profile 2014 (Unweighted)		Respondent profile 2014 (Weighted)		Respondent profile 2012	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Heterosexual/ straight	-	-	1,710	94%	1,707	94%	3530	65%
Gay man	-	-	2	<1%	3	<1%	19	<1%
Lesbian/ gay women	-	-	4	<1%	5	<1%	10	<1%
Bisexual	-	-	8	<1%	9	1%	10	<1%
Prefer not to say	-	-	87	5%	86	5%	1877	34%
Total	89,743		1,811		1,811		5,446	

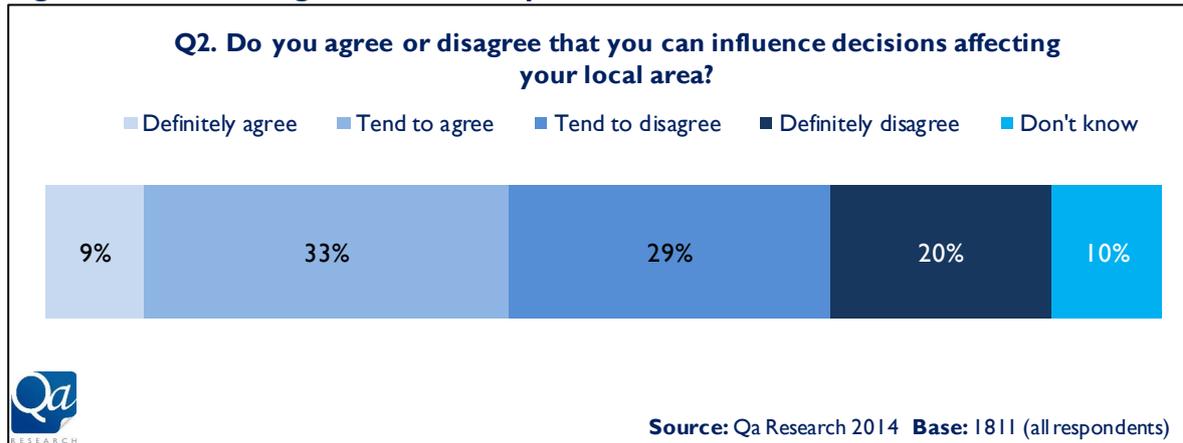
5.2 Involvement and influence over local decisions

In this section of the report, residents' attitudes towards their ability to influence the decisions made in their local area are explored. It also looks at the level of involvement in voluntary activities.

5.2.1 Ability to influence decisions affecting the local area

Respondents were asked how far they agreed or disagreed that they could influence decisions affecting their local area. The results are shown in the chart below;

Figure 4. Influencing decisions in respondents' local area



Half (49%) of respondents disagreed that they could influence decisions affecting their local area (Net: 'tend to disagree' (29%), 'definitely disagree' (20%)), compared to only two fifths (41%) who agreed that they could (Net: 'tend to agree' (33%), 'definitely agree' (9%)).

Comparison to 2012;

Positively, the proportion of residents who agreed that they could influence decisions affecting their local area has increased significantly since 2012; then, only one third (30%) agreed that they could have an influence compared to two fifths (41%) in 2014.

Note, that this increase has not been driven by a reduction in the proportion of residents who disagree that they can influence decisions, as this figure has decreased only marginally since 2012 (49% vs. 53%). Instead, the increase in agreement comes from a decrease in the proportion saying 'don't know' (10% vs. 17%).

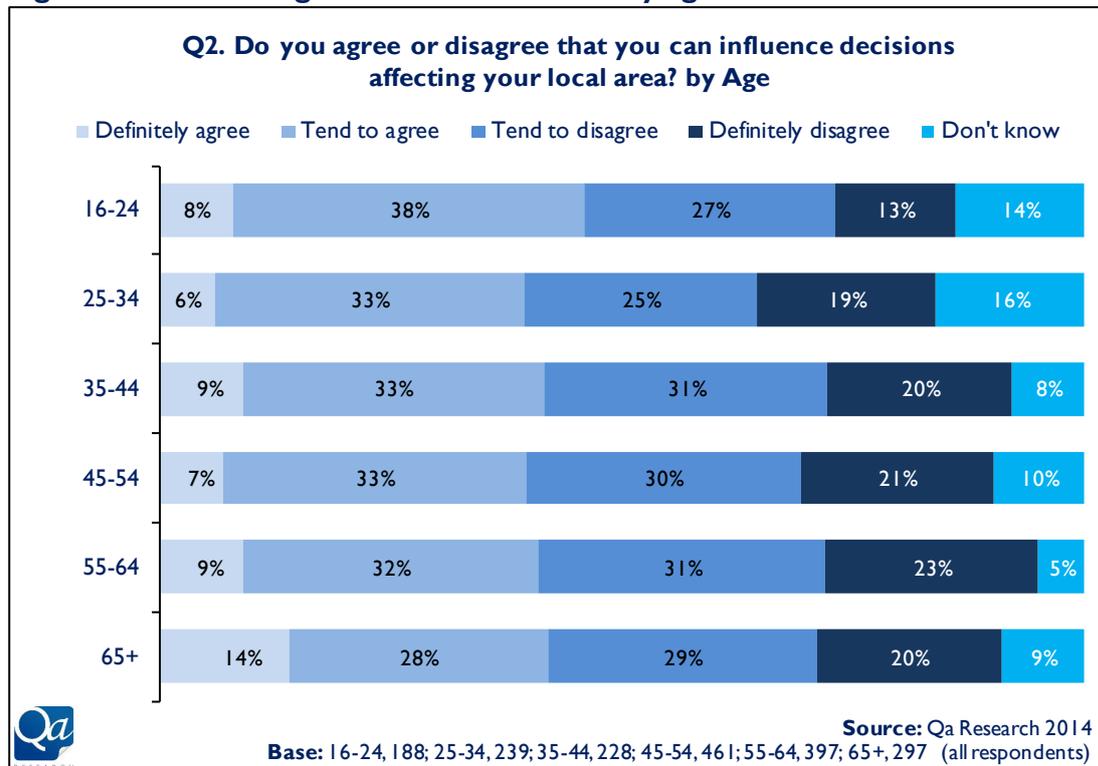
Demographic differences

White British respondents were more likely to disagree (50%) that they could influence decisions than those from BME backgrounds (43%). This does not mean that that BME respondents were more likely to agree, however, and in fact the proportion of BME respondents who said they agreed (36%) was lower than that the proportion of White British respondents (42%).

Instead, the lower level of both agreement and disagreement amongst BME respondents seems to come from the significantly greater proportion of this group that say 'don't know' (21%) compared to White British respondents (8%). This may suggest a lack of awareness amongst the BME group about how they could influence decisions that affect their local area.

There was some significant variation between the level of agreement by age groups, and this is shown in the chart below;

Figure 5. Influencing decisions in local area by age

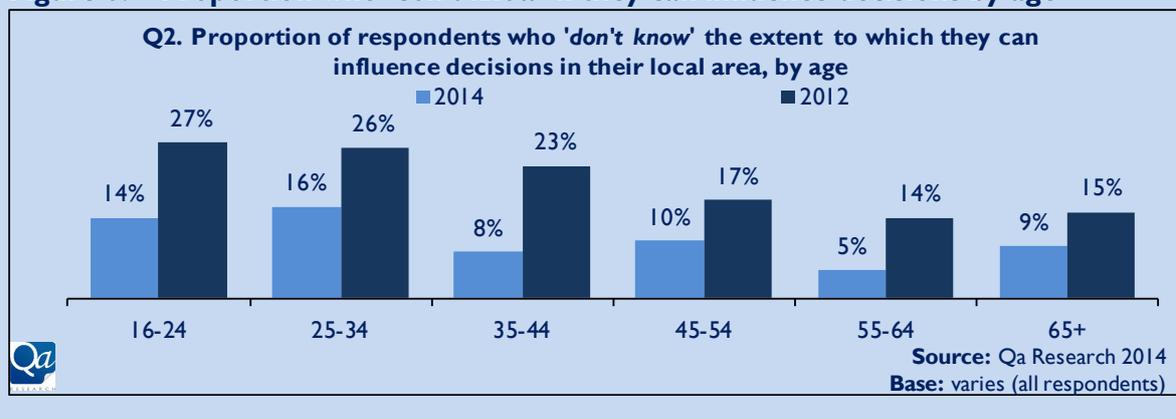


Respondents aged 35 and over were significantly more likely to *disagree* that they could influence decisions (35-44: 51%, 45-54 50%, 55-64: 54%, 65+ 49%) than those aged 16-24 (40%). There was, however, no significant difference by age in the proportion of respondents who *agreed* that they could influence decisions (despite some variation in this figure).

Comparison to 2012;

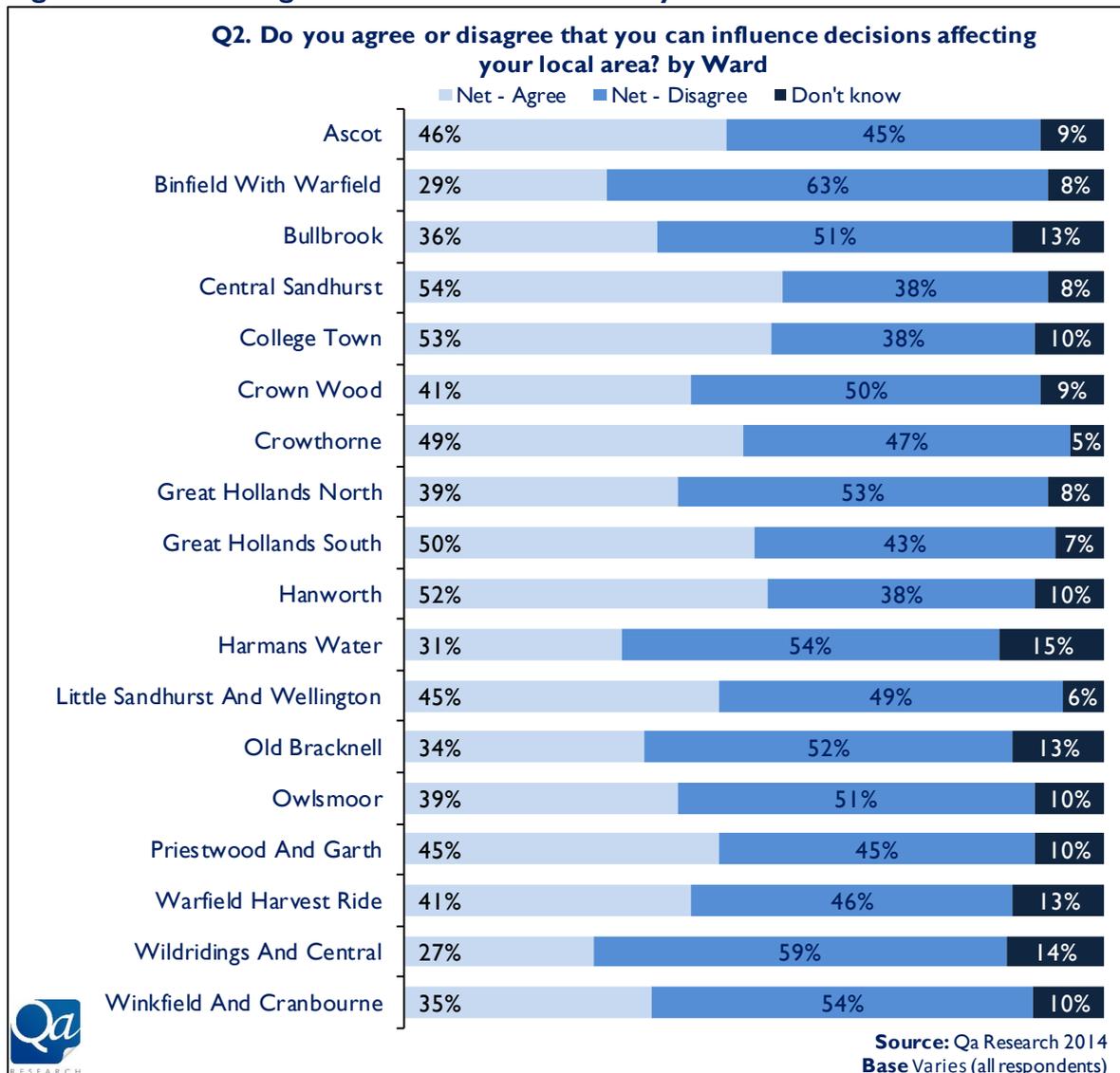
The data from 2014 stands in contrast to that of 2012, where generally the older the respondent the more likely they were to agree that they could influence decisions in their area. This was not true in 2014, and there is some evidence to suggest the opposite might now be true. The differences may be due to the lower proportion saying 'don't know' in 2014 and the differences amongst all age groups is shown in the chart below;

Figure 6. Proportion who 'don't know' if they can influence decisions by age



Differences in opinion by ward are shown in the chart below

Figure 7. Influencing decisions in the local area by ward

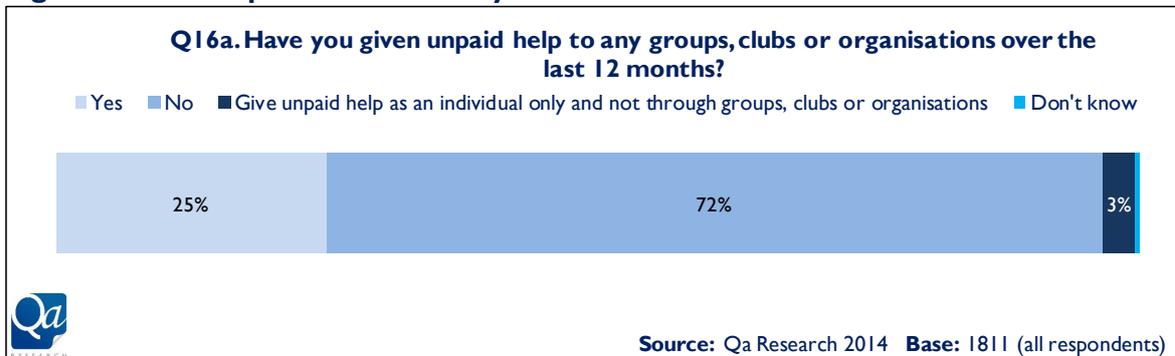


Agreement was highest in Central Sandhurst (54%), College Town (53%), Hanworth (52%), Great Hollands South (50%), and Crowthorne (49%); it was lowest in Binfield with Warfield (29%) and Wildridings and Central (27%).

5.2.2 Involvement in volunteering activities

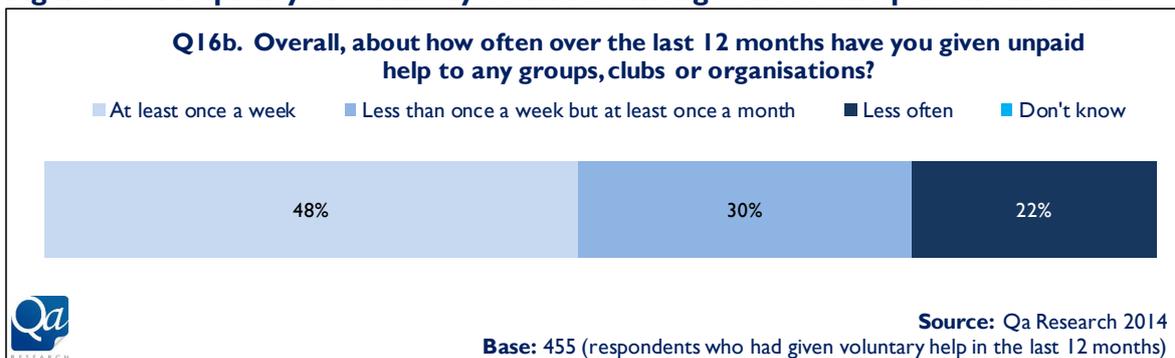
Respondents were asked if they had given any unpaid help to any groups, clubs, or organisations over the previous 12 months. Results are shown in the chart below;

Figure 8. Participation in voluntary activities



The majority (72%) of respondents had not given any voluntary help with any groups, clubs, or organisations over the last 12 months. The one quarter (25%) who had given unpaid help were asked how often this was;

Figure 9. Frequency of voluntary activities amongst those who partake in them



Amongst those who had given voluntary help, half (48%) did so 'at least once a week', and another third (30%) did so 'less often than once a week but at least once a month'. This means that three quarters (78%) of respondents volunteer at least once a month; at an overall level (including those who do not volunteer) this represents one fifth (20%) of the total sample.

Comparison to 2012;

The represents a significant decrease since 2012, when over one quarter (28%) overall indicated they had given unpaid help at least once a month. However it important to consider that older ages groups were overrepresented in the 2012 data; these groups are significantly more likely to volunteer at least once a month than younger age groups (see analysis on the following page), and so this may have overinflated the volunteering figure from 2012.

The proportion of respondents giving voluntary help at least once a month can also be compared to national data. The Community Life Survey, a major national survey capturing views on issues for supporting strong communities, found that 29% of respondents undertook formal volunteering in 2012-13 and 27% in 2013-14¹. This suggests that not only has the rate of formal volunteering declined within Bracknell Forest, but it has declined more rapidly than the national average.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-2013-to-2014-data>

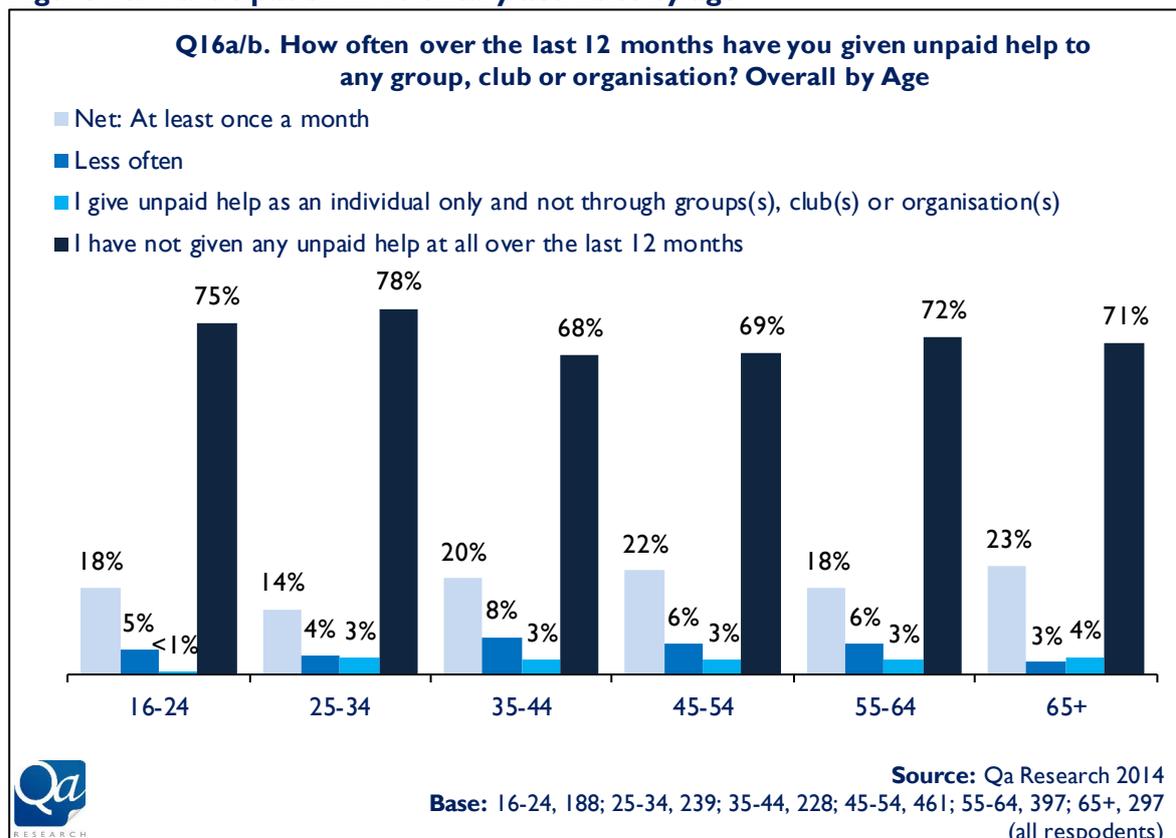
Demographic differences

There were no statistical differences between the proportion of male and female respondents who had given unpaid help over the last 12 months.

White British respondents were significantly more likely to volunteer (26%) than those from BME backgrounds however (17%).

There was also variation in the level of volunteering based on the age of respondents. The chart below shows variation in the proportion of respondents volunteering at least once a month (as a percentage of all respondents), as well as those who undertake informal volunteering and those who did not volunteer, split out by age;

Figure 10. Participation in voluntary activities by age



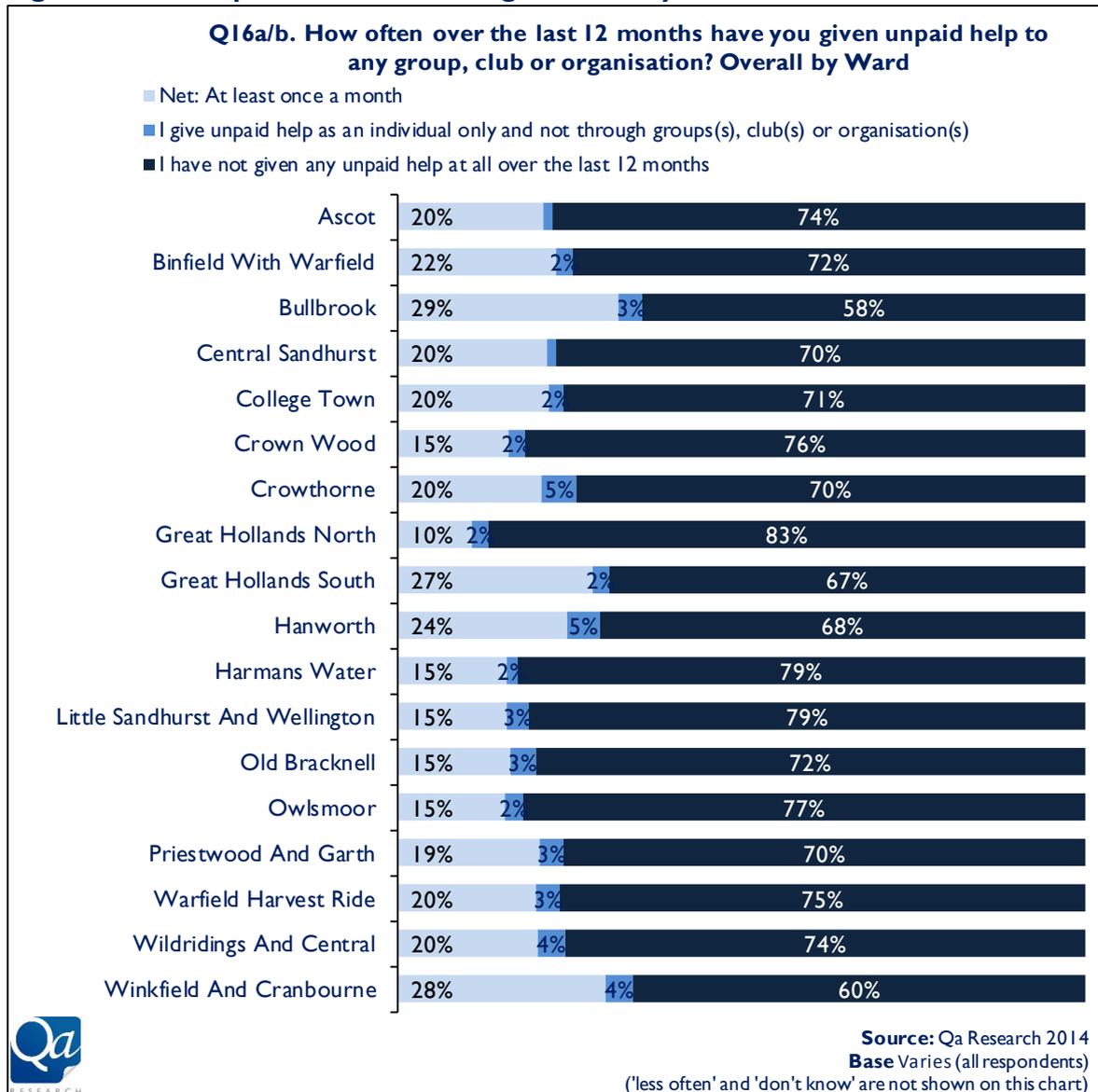
The proportion of those volunteering at least once a month is highest amongst respondents aged 65 and over (23%) and is lowest amongst those aged 25-34 (14%).

Comparison to 2012;

These are the same highest and lowest age groups as in 2012. However, the proportion volunteering has decreased for both. Previously, 31% of those aged 65 and over and 18% of those aged 25-34 volunteered at least once a month. Indeed, the proportion of respondents volunteering has decreased across all age groups rather than just certain groups.

The chart below shows variation in the proportion of respondents volunteering at least once a month (as a percentage of all respondents), as well as those who undertook informal volunteering and those who did not volunteer, stratified by ward;

Figure 11. Participation in volunteering activities by Ward



The wards with the highest proportion of respondents volunteering at least once a month were Bullbrook (29%), Winkfield and Cranbourne (28%) and Great Hollands South (27%). The proportion of respondents in the ward that was aged 65 and over was higher than the borough average (15%) in Bullbrook (21%) and Winkfield and Cranbourne (29%), and this may explain why the rate of regular volunteering was higher in these wards. This was not true of Great Hollands South however (17% aged 65+).

The level of regular volunteering was lowest in Great Hollands North (10%).

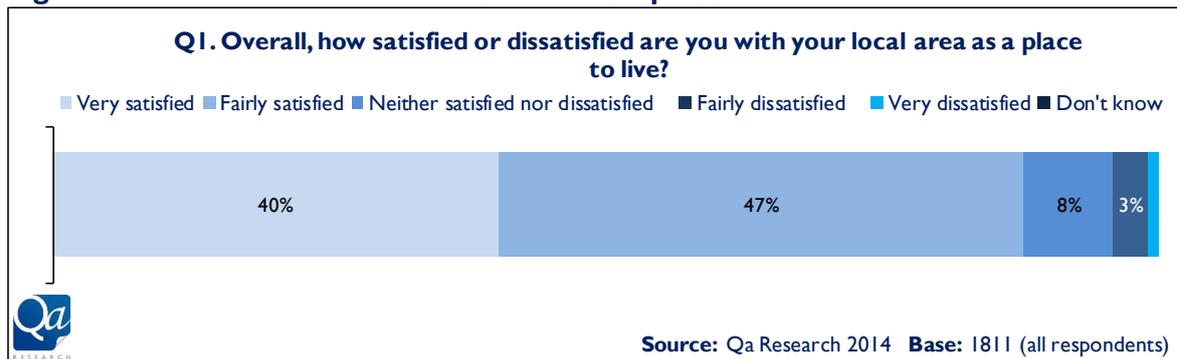
5.3 Residents' attitudes towards their local area

The survey captured a variety of information on respondent satisfaction with services in their local area and their local area itself. In addition, respondents were asked to indicate their use of the various services provided by the Council.

5.3.1 Satisfaction with local area

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with their local area as a place to live. The following chart highlights the results.

Figure 12. Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live



In total, the majority indicated that they were satisfied with their local area as a place to live, with 87% indicating that they were either 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied'. Notably, respondents were more likely to say they were 'fairly satisfied' rather than 'very satisfied' (47% vs. 40%).

Only one-in-twenty (5%) indicated any degree of dissatisfaction.

Respondents were more likely to feel satisfied with their area if they agreed rather than disagreed that they could influence decisions affecting their local area (93% vs. 81%) and if they agreed rather than disagreed that their local area 'is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together' (91% vs. 73%).

Additionally, respondents were generally more inclined to feel satisfied with their local area if they agreed rather than disagreed that the Council provides value for money (93% vs. 65%) and if they were satisfied rather than dissatisfied with the way the council runs things (93% vs. 64%).

Comparison with 2012;

No significant difference in the proportion of respondents indicating that they feel satisfied with their local area was recorded in 2014 compared to 2012 (87% vs. 85%).

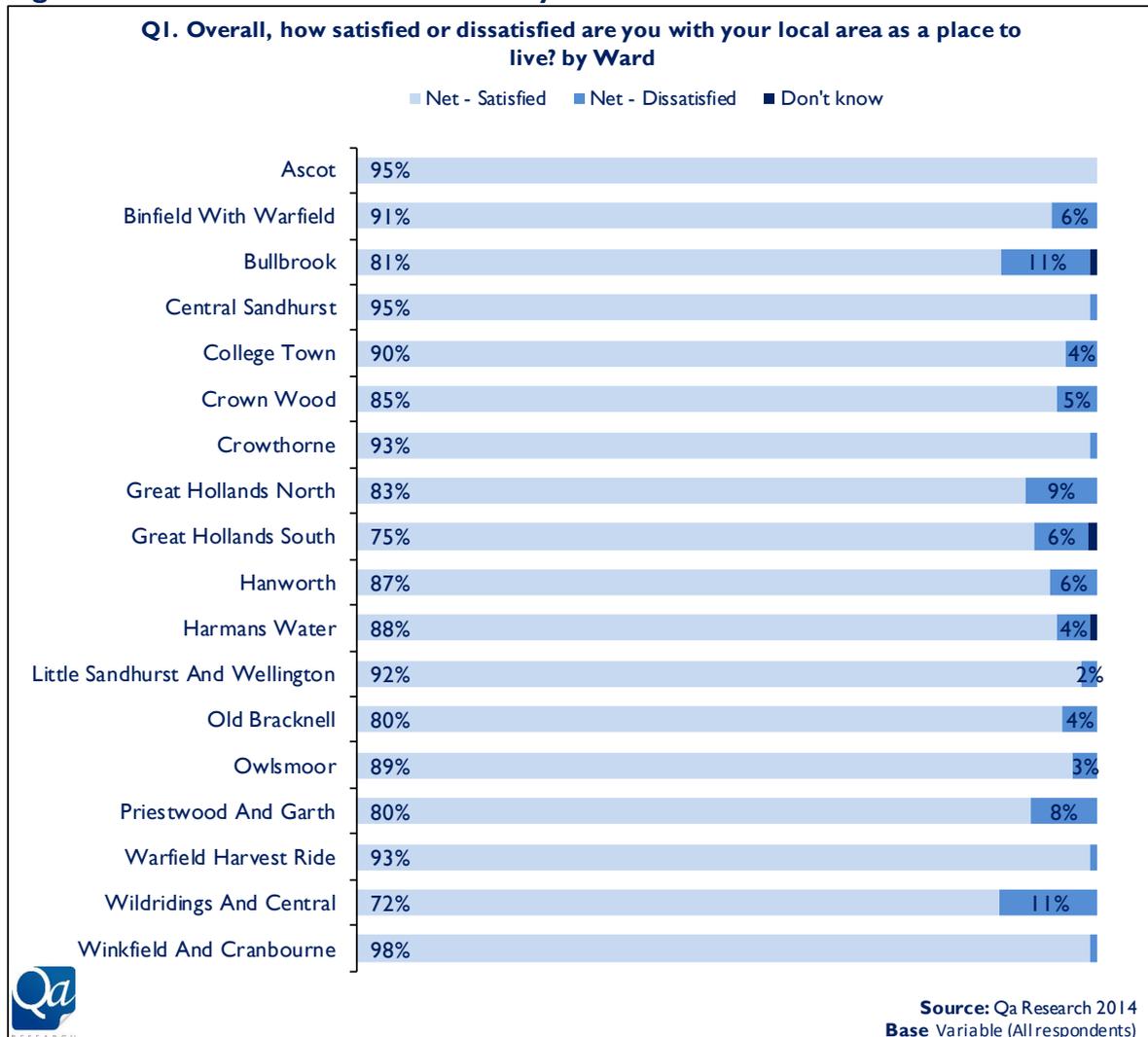
Demographic differences

Generally, respondents of all age groups were satisfied with their local area, although this was significantly higher amongst those aged 35-44 when compared to the other age groups (16-24: 85%, 25-34: 84%, 35-44: 93%, 45-54: 89%, 55-64: 86%, 65+: 87%).

No other significant differences were recorded between different demographic groups.

Some differences were also apparent between respondents from each ward and these are shown below (note that this chart excludes those saying 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied');

Figure 13. Satisfaction with local area by ward



Specifically, satisfaction was highest amongst respondents in the wards of Winkfield and Cranbourne (98%), Ascot (95%), Central Sandhurst (95%), Warfield Harvest Ride (93%) and Crowthorne (93%); it was lowest in Wildridings and Central (72%) and Great Hollands South (75%).

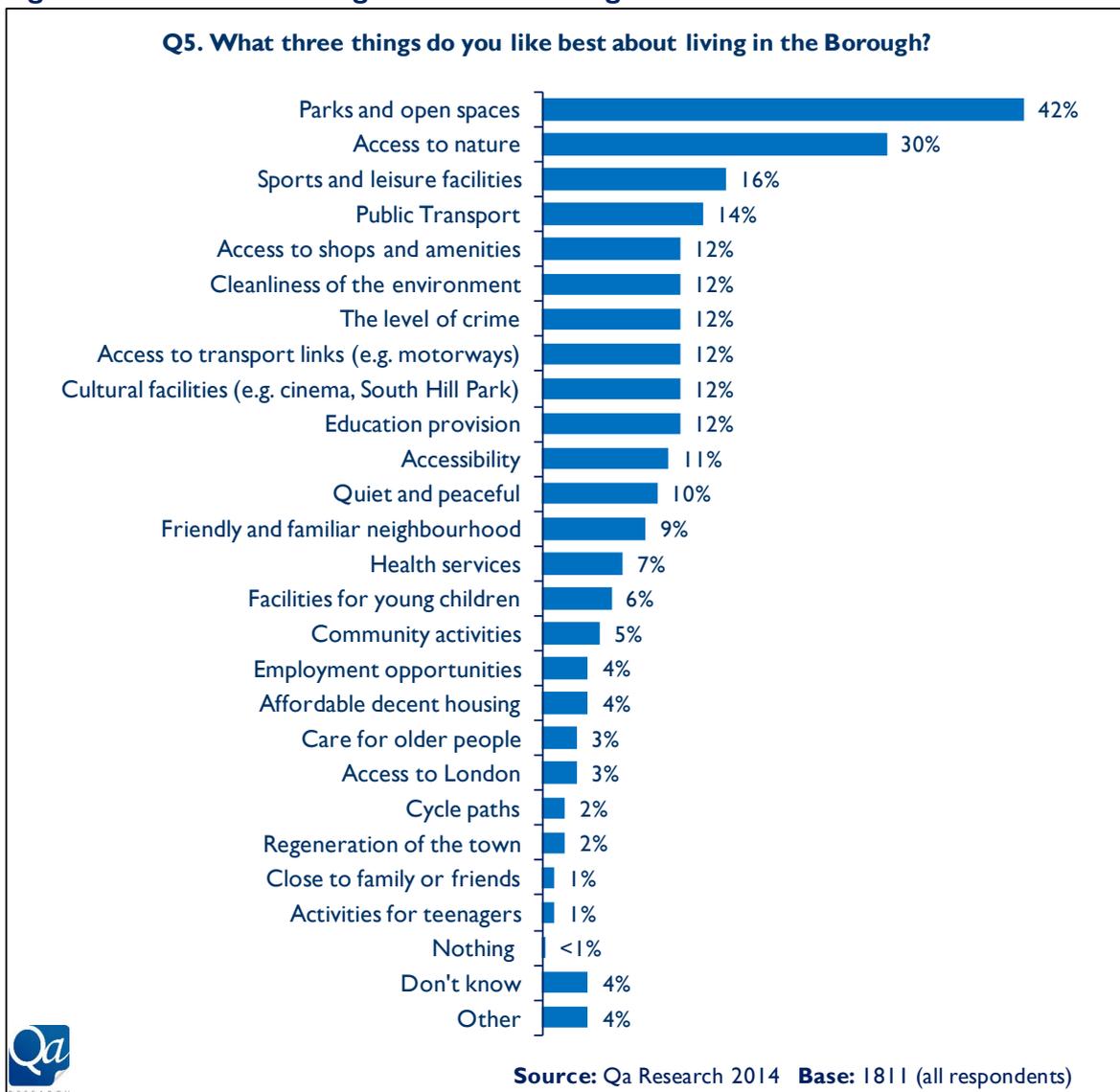
It should be noted that around one-in-ten respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied in Wildridings and Central (11%) and also in Bullbrook (11%).

When satisfaction levels are analysed by parish, it is those living in Bracknell Town who were the least satisfied (81%) when compared to residents in the parishes of Binfield (90%), Sandhurst Town (91%), Crowthorne (93%), Warfield (94%) and Winkfield (95%).

5.3.2 Perception of the best things about the Borough

Respondents were asked to indicate the three things they liked best about living in the Borough and the following chart displays the results. This was an entirely spontaneous question and respondents were not prompted with answers.

Figure 14. Three best things about the Borough



Here, the two most frequently mentioned aspects of the borough related to access to green spaces particularly 'parks and open spaces' (42%) and 'access to nature' (30%).

A range of other things were mentioned by just over one-in-ten residents indicating that there are many aspects of living in the borough that residents are pleased with and the highest of these were 'sports and leisure facilities' (16%) and 'public transport' (14%). Additionally, respondents talked about a wide-range of other aspects of the borough, ranging from local infrastructure such as 'access to shops and amenities' (12%) and 'access to transport links (e.g. motorways)' (12%) and also environmental factors such as 'cleanliness of the environment' (12%) and that it is 'quiet and peaceful' (10%).

More fundamental features of the borough were also mentioned by around one-in-ten respondents including 'the level of crime' (12%) and 'education provision' (12%).

Comparison with 2012;

It is important to note that the change in methodology between 2012 and 2014 has an impact on how this question was asked. In 2012 when the survey was a paper self-completion survey, a list of possible answers was provided to help prompt respondents. In the 2014 telephone interview no prompting was given by the interviewers. Consequently, direct comparisons between the year-on-year findings should be treated with caution.

However, it is clear that access to green spaces is important to the residents of the borough as the two most frequently mentioned aspects in 2012 were 'parks and open spaces' (58%) and 'access to nature' (50%).

Demographic differences

The most frequently mentioned aspect amongst both males and females was 'parks and open spaces' (38% and 46% respectively), but some differences between the genders were recorded. Generally, females were more likely than males to mention aspects relating to children including 'education provision' (15% vs. 9%) and 'facilities for young children' (8% vs. 4%).

In contrast, males were more likely to mention 'sports and leisure facilities' (18% vs. 14%), 'access to transport links (e.g. motorways)' (14% vs. 10%) as well as 'access to London' (4% vs. 2%) and 'accessibility' more generally (12% vs. 9%).

Some differences between BME and White British respondents were also apparent,. Although to a degree these reflect the fact that BME respondents were generally younger. Consequently, BME respondents were significantly more likely to mention 'education provision' (24% vs. 10%) and 'facilities for young children' (10% vs. 5%). However, they were also more likely to mention 'the level of crime' (23% vs. 11%), 'health services' (12% vs. 6%) and 'employment opportunities' (8% vs. 3%).

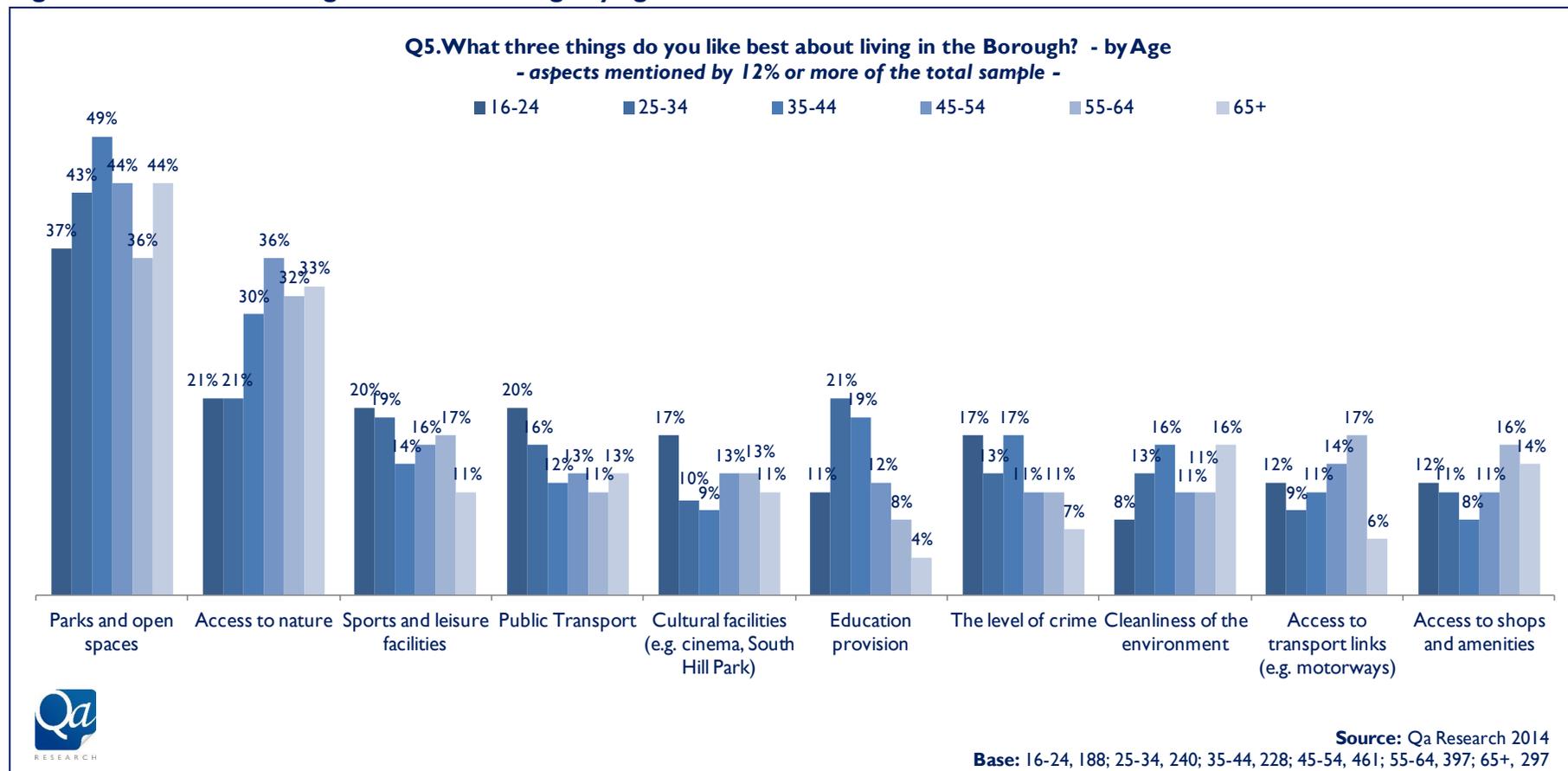
Differences by age are shown on the chart overleaf. As would be expected, those aspects mentioned most often varied between respondents of different age groups, reflecting different life-stages and needs, although 'parks and open spaces' was the most frequently mentioned aspect by all age groups (16-24: 37%, 25-34: 43%, 35-44: 93%, 45-54: 89%, 55-64: 86%, 65+: 87%).

More specifically, the very youngest respondents (aged 16-24) were more likely to mention 'public transport', but they were also more likely to mention that the borough is 'quiet and peaceful' (16-24: 16%, 25-34: 11%, 35-44: 8%, 45-54: 9%, 55-64: 9%, 65+: 9%).

Respondents in the middle age groups were the most likely to mention 'education provision' and this was mentioned by a fifth of those aged 25-34 (21%) and 35-44 (19%) who were also the most likely to mention 'facilities for young children' (11% and 14% respectively). In line with this, respondents aged 35-44 were the most likely to have children aged under 18 at home (77%) and 40% of those aged 25-34 also said that this was the case.

The chart below shows the aspects of the borough that were mentioned by 12% or more of the total sample by different age groups;

Figure 15. Three best things about the Borough by age



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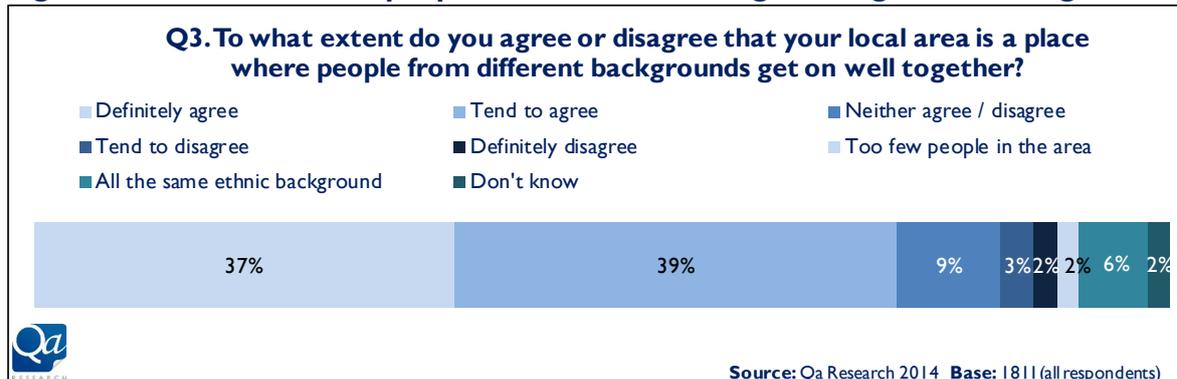


5.3.3 Community cohesion in residents' local area

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which people from different backgrounds get on together, and the extent to which people in their local area treat each other with respect and consideration.

The first chart explores residents' agreement with the statement that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

Figure 16. Extent to which people from different backgrounds get on well together



When responses to this question are recalculated to bring it in line with the methodology used in the 2006/7 BVPI Survey and the 2008 Place Survey, the vast majority (94%) of respondents agreed that their local area was a place where 'people from different backgrounds get on well together'. The 2006/7 and 2008 methodology did not include responses of 'neither agree nor disagree', 'too few people in the area', 'all the same ethnic background', and 'don't know', and so these have been excluded to produce the figures in this paragraph.

With these responses included, more than three-quarters (76%) of respondents agreed that their local area was a place where 'people from different backgrounds get on well together' and this proportion is almost equally divided between those who said that they 'definitely agree' (37%) and those that 'tend to agree' (39%).

This measure correlates with feelings of satisfaction with the local area and it is notable that respondents who were satisfied with their local area as a place to live were significantly more likely than those who were dissatisfied to agree that people get on well together (79% vs. 42%) and in fact, a fifth (21%) of those dissatisfied with their local area disagree that 'people from different backgrounds get on well together' there.

Comparison with 2012;

In the 2006/7 BVPI Survey and 2008 Place Survey 82% of respondents indicated that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area. This increased significantly to 87% in 2012, and has increased again to 94% in 2014 (when figures from 2012 and 2014 are adjusted).

Factoring in all responses, compared with the 2012 data a higher proportion of respondents in 2014 agree with this measure (76% vs. 62%). One difference in the profile of 2014 and 2012 respondents is that the age profile of the 2014 sample is more representative of the borough, while the 2012 age profile was skewed towards older residents, reflecting the methodology.

Consequently, differences in agreement for this measure by age and specifically a greater level of agreement amongst younger respondents might explain the higher level of agreement recorded in 2014. No such pattern is evident, confirming that this year-on-year increase in agreement is likely to be a true increase and not reflective of the change in methodology.

Demographic differences

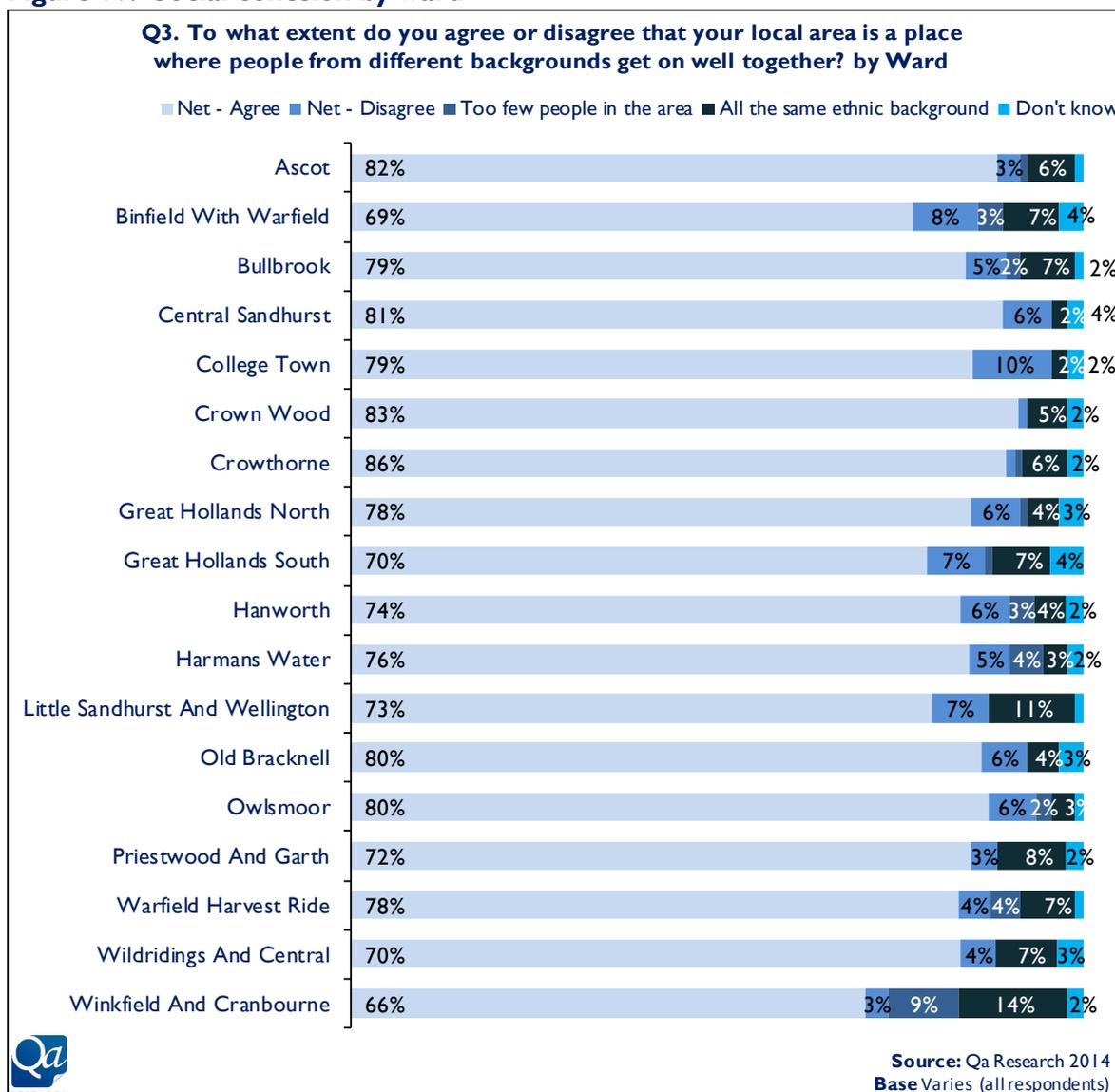
Although no difference in agreement was recorded between the genders and males were as likely as females to agree with this measure (76% and 76% respectively), males were more likely to disagree (7% vs. 4%). This pattern was evident in the 2012 findings as well.

Moreover, BME respondents were more likely than those from White British backgrounds to disagree that their local area was a place where 'people from different backgrounds get on well together' (9% vs. 4%) and this is in contrast to the findings in 2012, where they were actually more likely to agree.

No other differences were recorded amongst key demographic groups.

The chart below shows levels of agreement by ward;

Figure 17. Social cohesion by ward



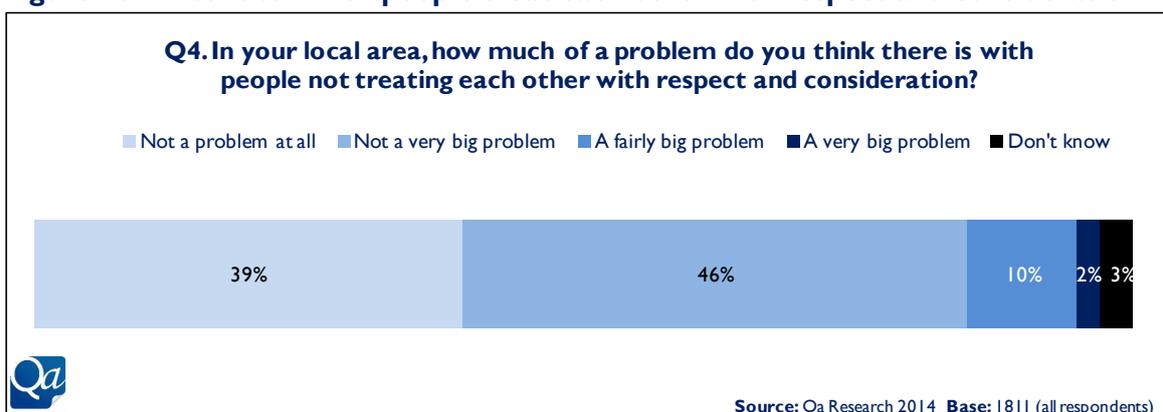
The majority of respondents in each ward agreed with this measure and agreement levels were generally higher than in the 2012 data, reflecting the picture noted amongst the total sample. Few

differences were recorded between respondents in each ward, although the level of agreement as highest amongst those in Crowthorne (86%) and Crown Wood (83%).

In 2012, analysis was undertaken comparing levels of agreement with the proportion of White British respondents living within each ward. This analysis highlighted that the higher the proportion of White British, the higher the level of agreement. The same analysis this year indicates that this is not the case and agreement that *'people from different backgrounds get on well together'* is consistent regardless of the proportion of White British and BME residents in the ward.

The following chart demonstrates the extent to which respondents felt that people in their local area treated each other with respect and consideration;

Figure 18. Extent to which people treat each other with respect and consideration



Just over one-in-ten respondents (13%) felt that this was a problem to some degree although most felt this was only a *'fairly big problem'* (10%) rather than a *'very big problem'* (2%). The majority of respondents clearly felt that this was not a problem however, as 85% indicated that it was either *'not a problem at all'* or *'not a very big problem'*.

While it is true that the majority of those who felt satisfied and those who felt dissatisfied with their local area as a place to live felt that *'people treating each other with respect and consideration'* was not a problem (88% and 53% respectively), those dissatisfied with their local area were significantly more likely to feel that this was a problem (10% and 39% respectively). Additionally, respondents who disagreed that *'people from different backgrounds get on well together'* were significantly more likely than those who agreed to see this as being a problem (50% vs. 8%). There is clearly a link between community cohesion and feeling satisfied with your local area.

Comparison with 2012;

In total, 78% of 2012 respondents felt that *'people treating each other with respect and consideration'* was not a problem, a figure significantly lower than that recorded in 2014 (85%). Differences in the profile of the samples in each year do not explain this increase and this should also therefore, be seen as a positive trend year-on-year.

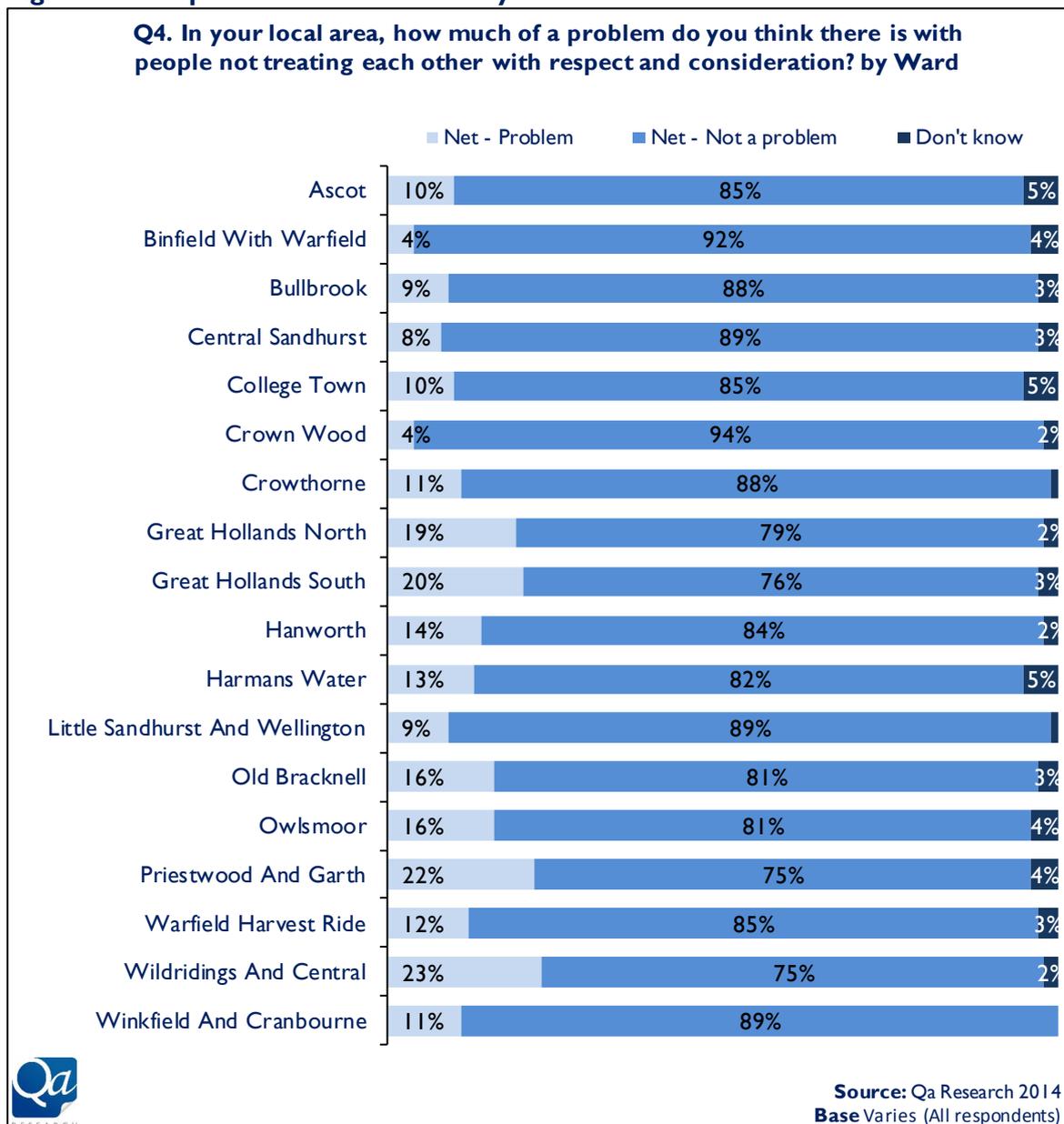
The proportion of respondents who felt that *'people treating each other with respect and consideration'* was a problem has remained essentially unchanged (2012: 14%, 2014: 13%), and there has been no significant shift.

Demographic differences

No differences were recorded here between respondents of different ages or genders, or between BME and White British respondents.

Some differences by ward were recorded and these are summarised in the chart below;

Figure 19. Respect and consideration by ward



It is evident from the chart above that around a fifth of respondents from certain wards felt that there was a problem with 'people treating each other with respect and consideration' and this included the wards of Wildridings and Central (23%), Priestwood and Garth (22%), Great Hollands North (19%) and Great Hollands South (20%).

A similar pattern was evident in 2012, but exactly why this should be the case in these wards is not completely clear from the Residents' Survey data, as differences in this measure are seemingly not driven by demographic differences.

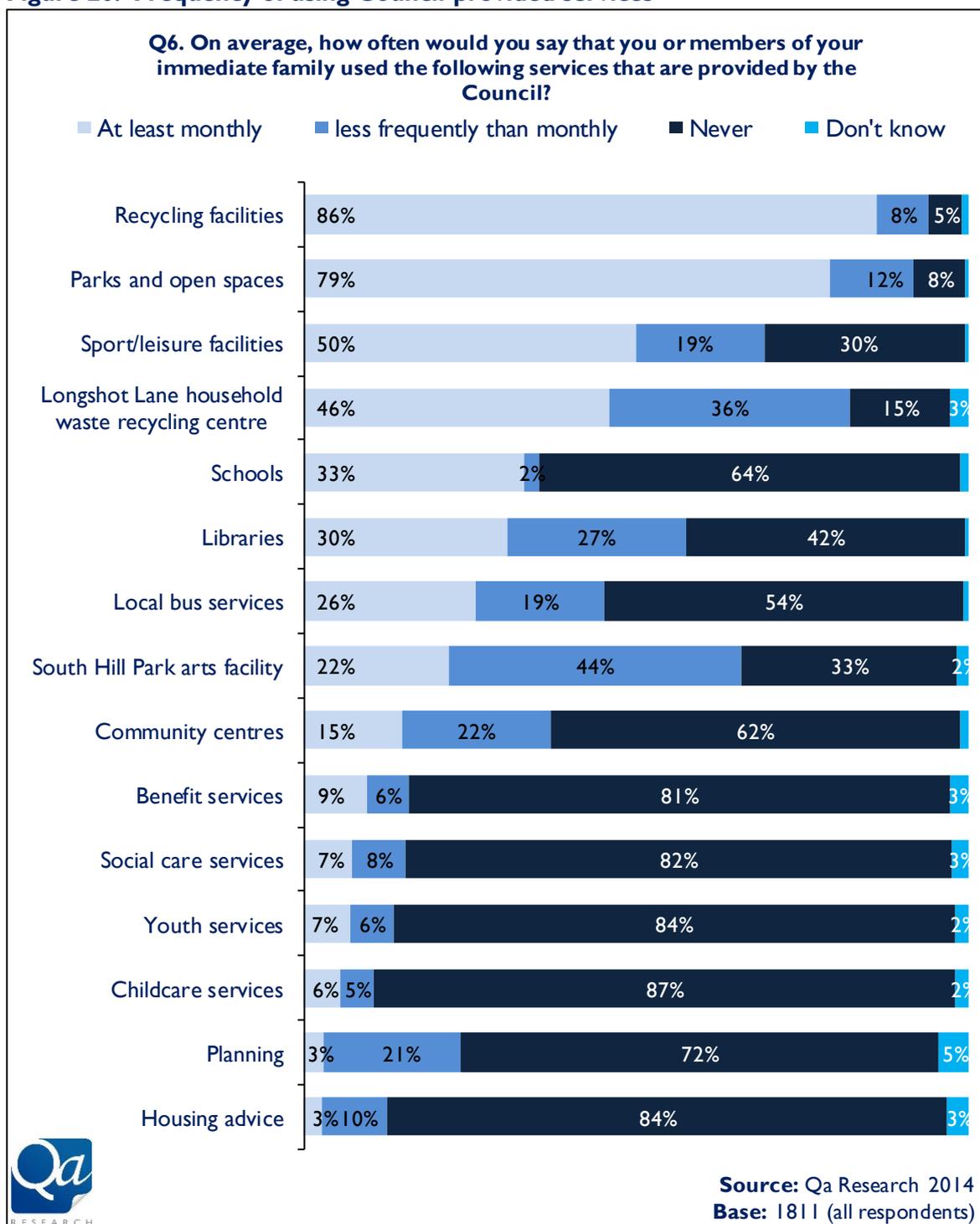
5.4 Use of and satisfaction with specific Council services

This section of the report examines the frequency of use of, and satisfaction with, specific Council services.

5.4.1 Use of specific Council services

Respondents were asked to rate how often they or member of their immediate family used a prompted list of specific Council services. The results are shown in the chart below;

Figure 20. Frequency of using Council-provided services



The most frequently used services on a monthly (net: 'daily', 'weekly' and 'monthly') basis were the 'recycling facilities' (86%) and the 'parks and open spaces' (79%).

More specifically, the 'recycling facilities' were used by one-in-six (16%) respondents on a 'daily' basis, by half (48%) on a 'weekly' basis, and by a quarter (23%) on a 'monthly' basis. In contrast 'parks and open spaces' were used by greater proportion on a 'weekly' basis (42%) than a 'daily' (20%) or 'monthly' (17%). Schools had the highest 'daily' usage rate however, at nearly one third (31%).

A high proportion of residents, over eight-in-ten in each case, did not use 'benefit services' (81%), 'social care services' (82%), 'youth services' (84%), 'childcare services' (87%), and 'housing advice' (84%). These, aside from 'housing advice', all fit into the category of welfare provision and the low levels of use of these obviously reflects the fact that these services are not universally available.

Comparison with 2012;

'Recycling facilities' and 'parks and open spaces' were also the most frequently used services in 2012. The frequency of which they are used has changed however; the proportion of respondents using the 'recycling facilities' at least monthly has decreased from the 96% that used it in 2012 to 86% in 2014. Caution must be exercised here, however, as this category was titled 'refuse collection / recycling' in 2012; the absence of refuse collection is the likely reason for this decrease. In contrast, the proportion using 'parks and open spaces' at least monthly has increased from 73% in 2012 (79% in 2014).

There have also been significant increases since 2012 in the proportion using 'sports/leisure facilities' (50% vs. 34%), 'schools' (33% vs. 22%), 'youth services' (7% vs. 2%), 'community centres' (15% vs. 12%), and 'planning' (3% vs. 1%). Some of these may be driven by the more representative sample of 2014 however, as the overrepresentation of older age groups in 2012 may have reduced the proportion using services relating to children.

Two services, 'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' and 'South Hill Park arts facility' were not services asked about in the 2012 survey; however, they are arguably analogous to the services of 'local tips/ household waste recycling centres' and 'arts facilities' that were present in the 2012 survey but not the 2014. Comparing these we see an increase in both; from 39% using 'local tips/ household waste recycling centres' at least monthly in 2012 to 46% using the 'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre', and from 11% using 'arts facilities' in 2012 on a monthly basis to 22% using the 'South Hill Park arts facility'. Therefore these comparisons have been included for interest only.

Demographic differences

There were significant differences between male and female respondents in terms of the proportion using services on a monthly basis. Male respondents were more likely to use 'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (49%) than females (43%). Female respondents were more likely to use 'schools' (37% vs. 29%), 'libraries' (34% vs. 26%), 'community centres' (18% vs. 12%) and 'childcare services' (7% vs. 4%) than males. This may be linked to the presence of children, as respondents with children aged under 18 were significantly more likely than those without to use these services at least monthly ('schools': 72% vs. 17%, 'libraries': 43% vs. 25%, 'community centres': 22% vs. 12%, 'childcare services': 12% vs. 3%).

BME respondents were more likely than White British respondents to use 'schools' (53% vs. 30%), 'libraries' (40% vs. 29%), 'local bus services' (35% vs. 24%), and 'childcare services' (9% vs. 5%) at least once a month. In contrast, White British respondents were more likely to use 'recycling facilities' (87% vs. 79%), 'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (49% vs. 32%), and 'Social care services' (8% vs. 3%). Again this may suggest lifestyle and cultural differences, this time between BME and White British respondents; however, it may also be related to age, as 60% of BME respondents were aged under 45 compared to only 36% of White British respondents.

Age (and by extension life stage) also have an impact on services used monthly, as shown below;

Figure 21. Monthly usage of Council provided services by age group

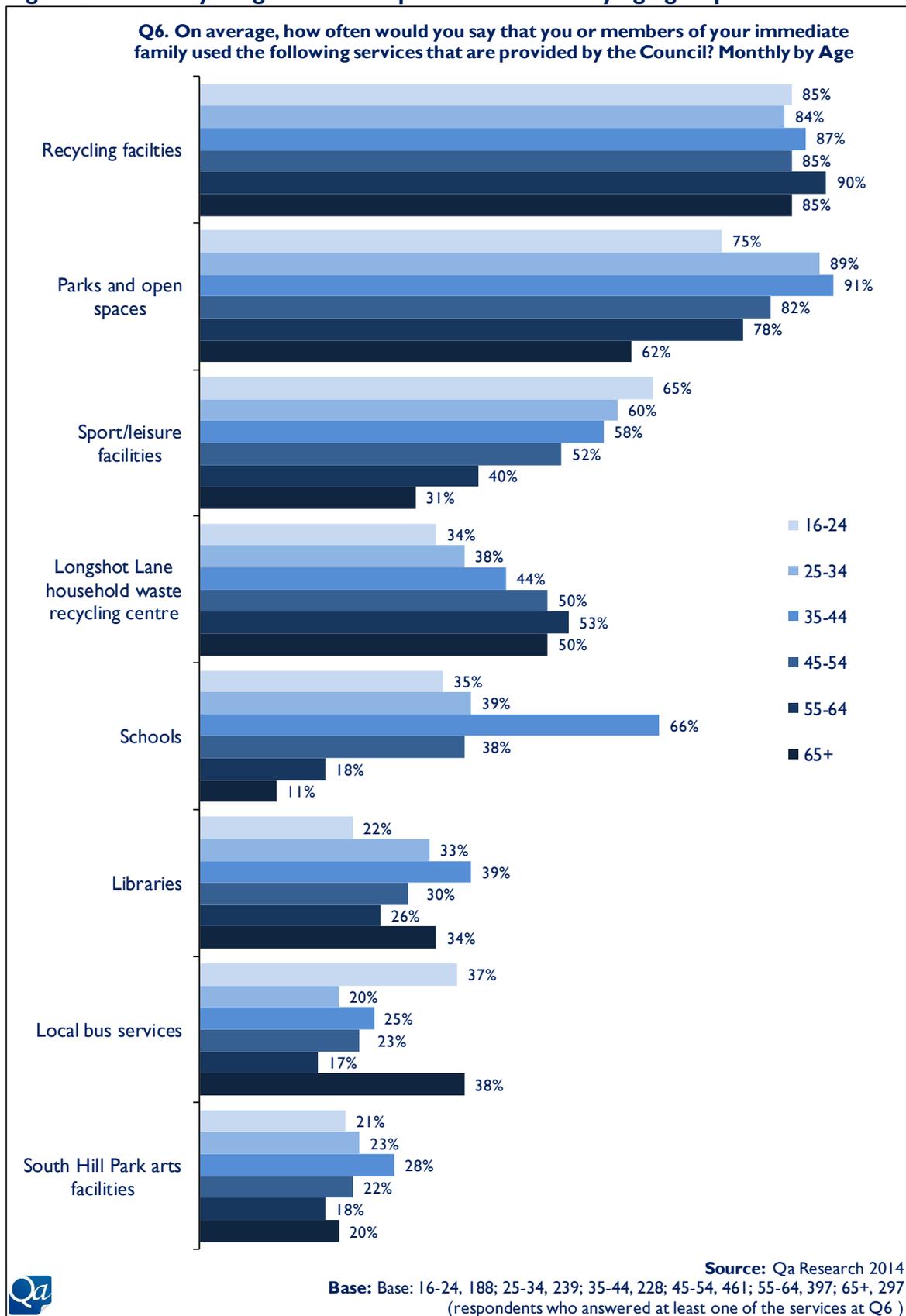
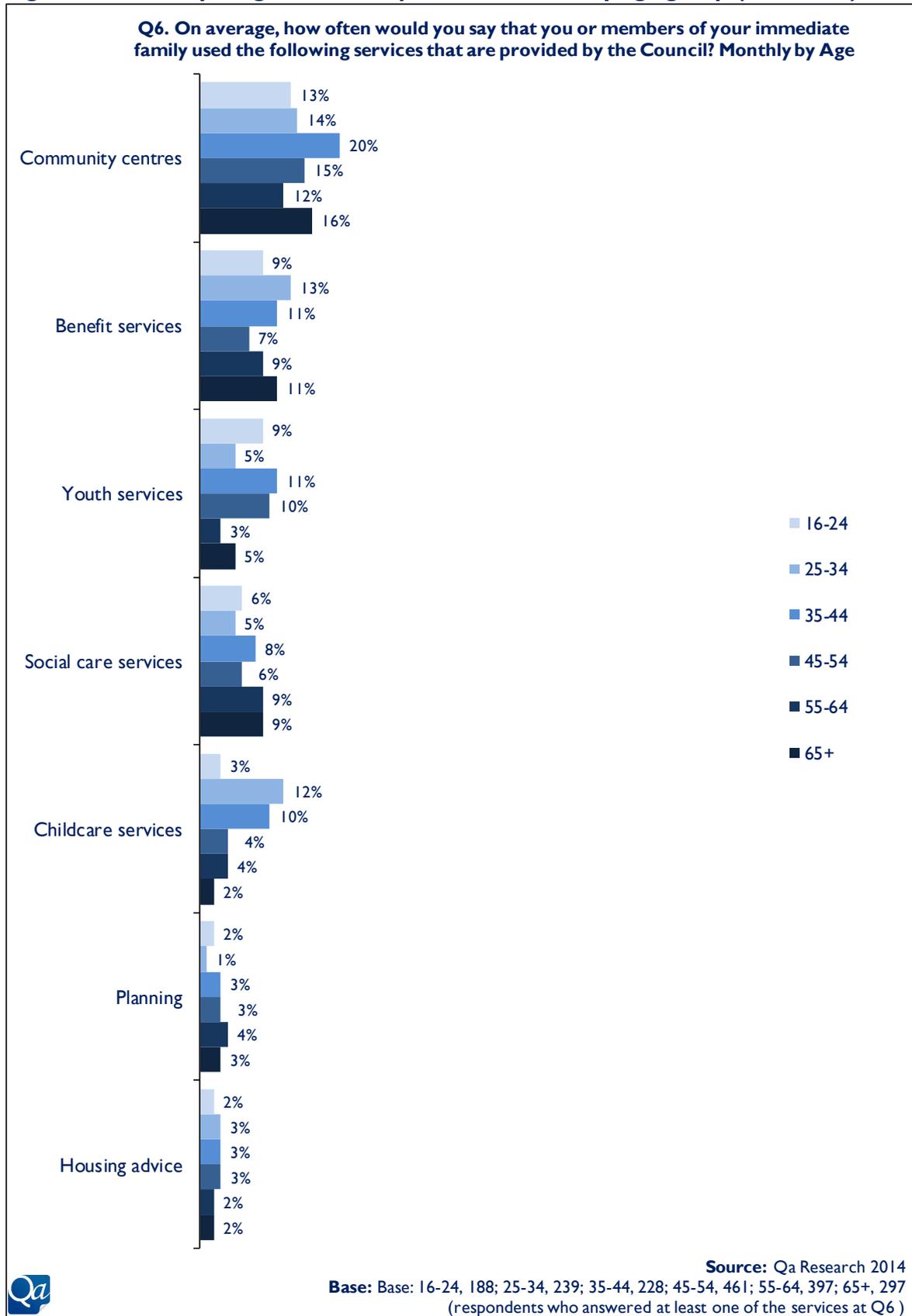


Figure 21. Monthly usage of Council provided services by age group (continued)



Respondents aged 35-44 were more likely than any other age group to be using 'schools' (66%) on at least a monthly basis, presumably because of their greater likelihood to have children at home (77%, significantly higher than any other age group). Similarly, childcare services were in greater use among respondents aged 25-34 (12%) (40% of this age group had children at home) and 35-44 (10%).

The youngest (aged 16-24) and oldest respondents (aged 65 and over) were particularly reliant on the 'local bus service', with 37% and 38% respectively using this service at least once a month. For the older age group this may be related to the free bus pass that is available to this cohort.

There were some minor variations between wards in how frequently respondents used Council services. Although the top three services used at least monthly for all wards come from just four services. These are shown on the following table;

Figure 22. Use of Council-provided services by ward

Ward	Services appearing in the top three most frequently used (activities done at least monthly)							
	Recycling facilities		Parks and open spaces		Sport/ leisure facilities		Longshot Lane household recycling centre	
	Pos. 1-3	%	Pos. 1-3	%	Pos. 1-3	%	Pos. 1-3	%
Ascot	1	88%	2	82%	3	46%		
Binfield with Warfield	1	86%	2	76%			3	57%
Bullbrook	1	87%	2	84%	3	53%		
Central Sandhurst	2	78%	1	79%	3	46%		
College Town	1	80%	2	74%	3	50%		
Crown Wood	1	87%	2	76%	3	56%		
Crowthorne	1	88%	2	73%			3	48%
Great Hollands North	1	85%	2	82%	3	50%		
Great Hollands South	1	86%	2	86%	3	60%		
Hanworth	1	88%	2	82%	3	53%		
Harmans Water	1	90%	2	83%	3	53%		
Little Sandhurst & Wellington	1	89%	2	78%	3	46%		
Old Bracknell	1	88%	2	78%	3	54%		
Owlsmoor	1	84%	2	80%	3	42%		
Priestwood & Garth	1	88%	2	75%			3	51%
Warfield Harvest Ride	2	84%	1	86%			3	58%
Wildridings & Central	1	87%	2	80%	3	58%		
Winkfield & Cranbourne	1	84%	2	73%			3	44%

'Recycling facilities' were the most frequently used service in all wards except for Central Sandhurst and Warfield Harvest Ride (where it was the second most used in both cases); the most used in these two wards was 'parks and open spaces', which was the second most used service in other wards.

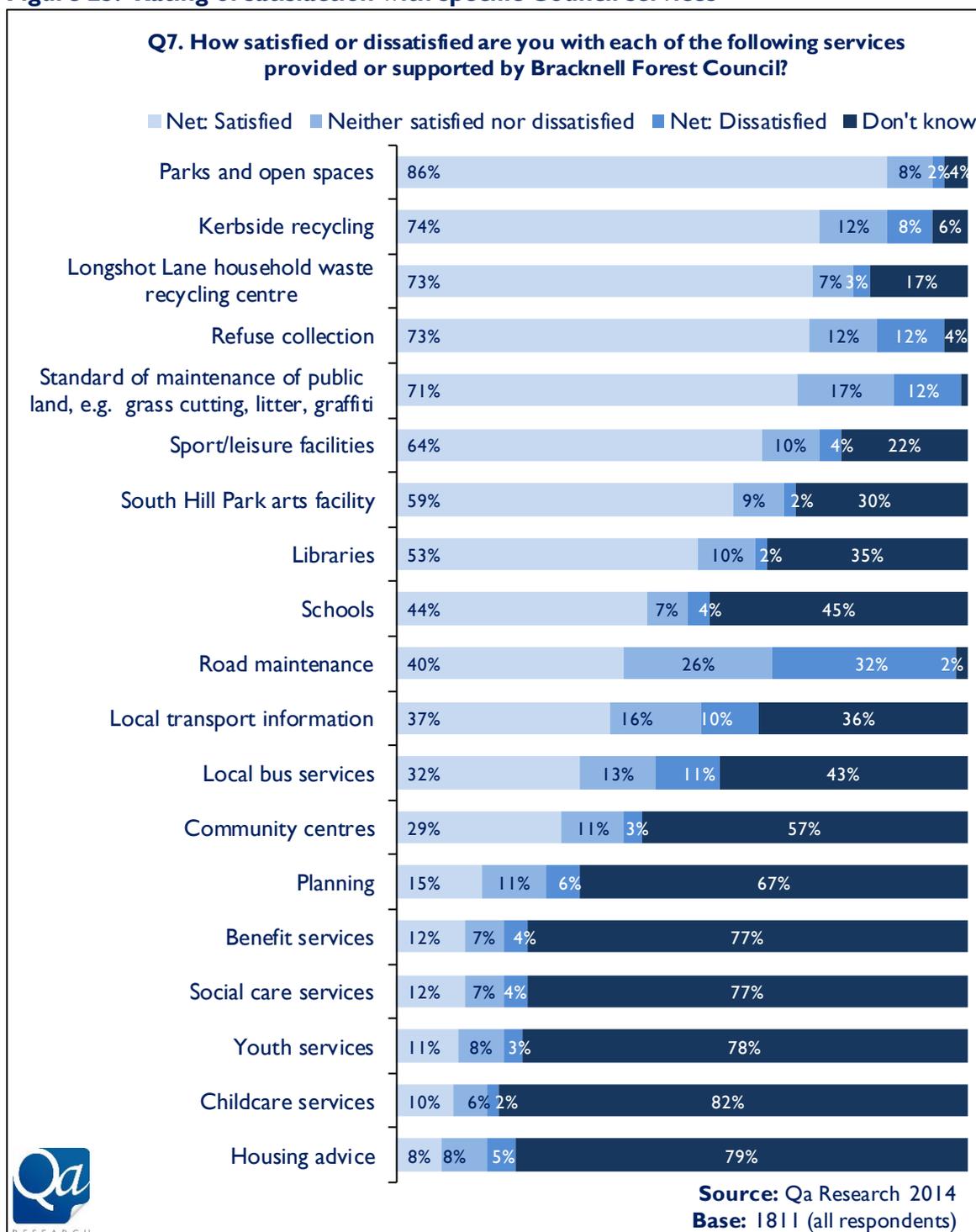
'Sport/leisure facilities' were the third most used services for all wards except for Binfield with Warfield, Crowthorne, Priestwood & Garth, Warfield Harvest Ride, and Winkfield & Cranbourne; in these wards, 'Longshot Lane household recycling centre' was the third most used service.

5.4.2 Satisfaction with specific Council services

Respondents were then asked to provide an indication of their satisfaction with the services provided by the Council.

Respondents indicated their satisfaction on a five point scale ranging from 'very dissatisfied' to 'very satisfied'. On the following charts 'very satisfied' and 'satisfied' have been netted together, as have the 'very dissatisfied' and 'dissatisfied' ratings, for ease of comprehension. On the chart below, the responses from all respondents (including those who 'never' use a service) are shown;

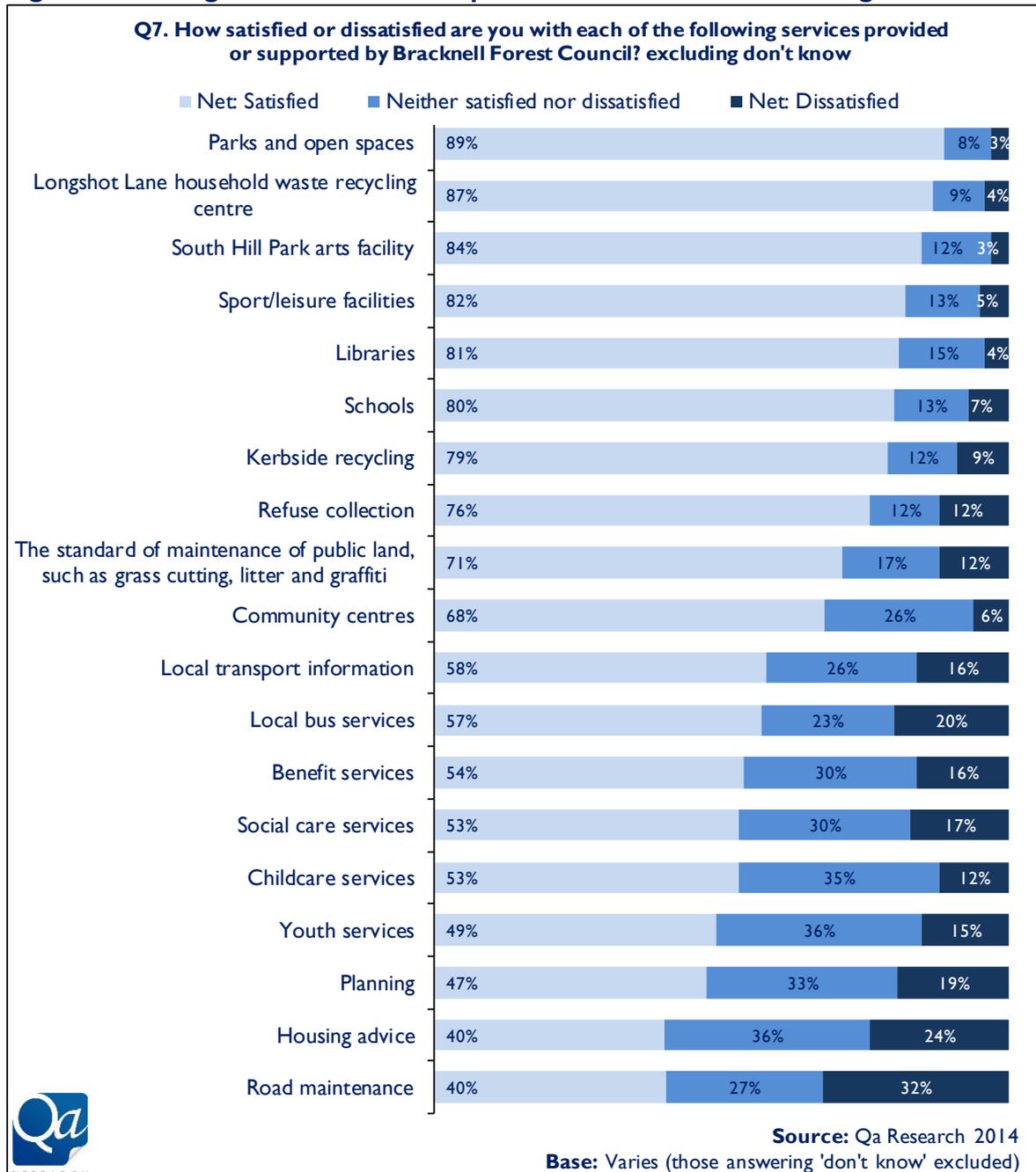
Figure 23. Rating of satisfaction with specific Council services



Satisfaction amongst respondents was highest for 'parks and open spaces' (86%) and 'kerbside recycling' (74%). Given that 'parks and open spaces' were the second most frequently used service, it is positive finding that this is the highest rated service in terms of satisfaction.

There were a high proportion of 'don't knows' for some services, however these are the same services that a high proportion of respondents said they 'never' used; this suggests that where people do not use a service they generally do not form an opinion on it. By excluding these 'don't knows', we can gain a more informative understanding of satisfaction amongst those who actually use each service. This is shown in the chart below;

Figure 24. Rating of satisfaction with specific Council services excluding 'don't know'



When 'don't knows' are excluded, it becomes clear that for all services the level of satisfaction is greater than the level of dissatisfaction.

The order of satisfaction has also changed slightly. The top options remain largely the same, with 'parks and open spaces' at the top (89%), and 'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' still highly rated. The level of satisfaction relative to other services has decreased for some however; 'kerbside recycling' goes from being the second highest rated service to the seventh while 'refuse collection' goes from the fourth highest to the eighth. Taking the place of these, 'sport/leisure facilities', 'South Hill Park arts facility', 'libraries', and 'schools' all move up from sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth to fourth, third, fifth and sixth respectively. The biggest fallers are the 'standard of maintenance of public land' and 'road maintenance', which go from fifth and tenth to ninth and nineteenth respectively.

It should be noted here that the base size of the services where there is a large proportion of 'don't knows' can be quite small (smallest is 'childcare services' with a base of 327).

Comparison to 2012;

Positively, the level of satisfaction (excluding 'don't know') for the majority of services has significantly increased since 2012. The table below compares the level of satisfaction for each service in 2014 with that in 2012; in some cases the services are not named exactly the same in each year, but they still compared as they are felt to be similar. A figure shaded grey is significantly higher than the figure in the opposing column;

Figure 25. Comparison of proportion satisfaction for specific services

2014		2012	
Service	%	%	Service
Parks and open spaces	89%	90%	Parks and open spaces
Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre	87%	86%	Local tips/ Household waste recycling centres
South Hill Park arts facility	84%	59%	Art facilities
Sport/leisure facilities	82%	68%	Sport/leisure facilities
Libraries	81%	75%	Libraries
Schools	80%	63%	Schools
Kerbside recycling	79%	74%	Doorstep recycling
Refuse collection	76%	79%	Refuse collection
The standard of maintenance of public land, such as grass cutting, litter and graffiti	71%	57%	Keep public land clear of litter and refuse
Community centres	68%	50%	Community centres
Local transport information	58%	42%	Local transport information
Local bus services	57%	48%	Local bus services
Benefit services	54%	n/a	(no option in 2012)
Childcare services	53%	32%	Childcare services
Social care services	53%	37%	Social care services
Youth services	49%	20%	Youth services
Planning	47%	28%	Planning
Road maintenance	40%	36%	Road maintenance
Housing advice	40%	n/a	(no option in 2012)

The highest percentage point (pp) increase has been for 'youth services', which has increased by 29pp since 2012 (49% vs. 20%). This is followed by 'South Hill Park arts facility', which has increased by 25pp (84% vs. 59%); this service was simply titled 'arts facilities' in 2012 however, and the more specific service of 2014 may account for some of this increase. In this case, it would show that the South Hill Park facility is more highly rated than arts facilities in general across Bracknell Forest.

Several welfare services have had higher increases relative to the other services; 'youth services' (29pp; 49% vs. 20%), 'childcare services' (21pp; 52% vs. 32%), and 'social care services' (16pp; 53% vs. 37%) are all amongst services with the greatest increases in satisfaction.

Demographic differences

The satisfaction scale can also be expressed numerically, where 'very dissatisfied' is number '1' through to 'very satisfied' which is number '5'. This can be used to generate a mean satisfaction score for each service. Answers of 'don't know' cannot be assigned a value and are therefore excluded from calculation of the mean satisfaction score.

Given the high number of services that respondents were asked to rate, the various demographic differences between respondents are shown on a variety of graphs, rather than described. The following charts use the mean satisfaction scores to demonstrate the differences between the various demographic groups. A higher mean score indicates a higher level of overall satisfaction for that group.

The chart on the following page demonstrates the differences by gender.

Female respondents tend to indicate higher levels of satisfaction than males across Council services. This was particularly true of;

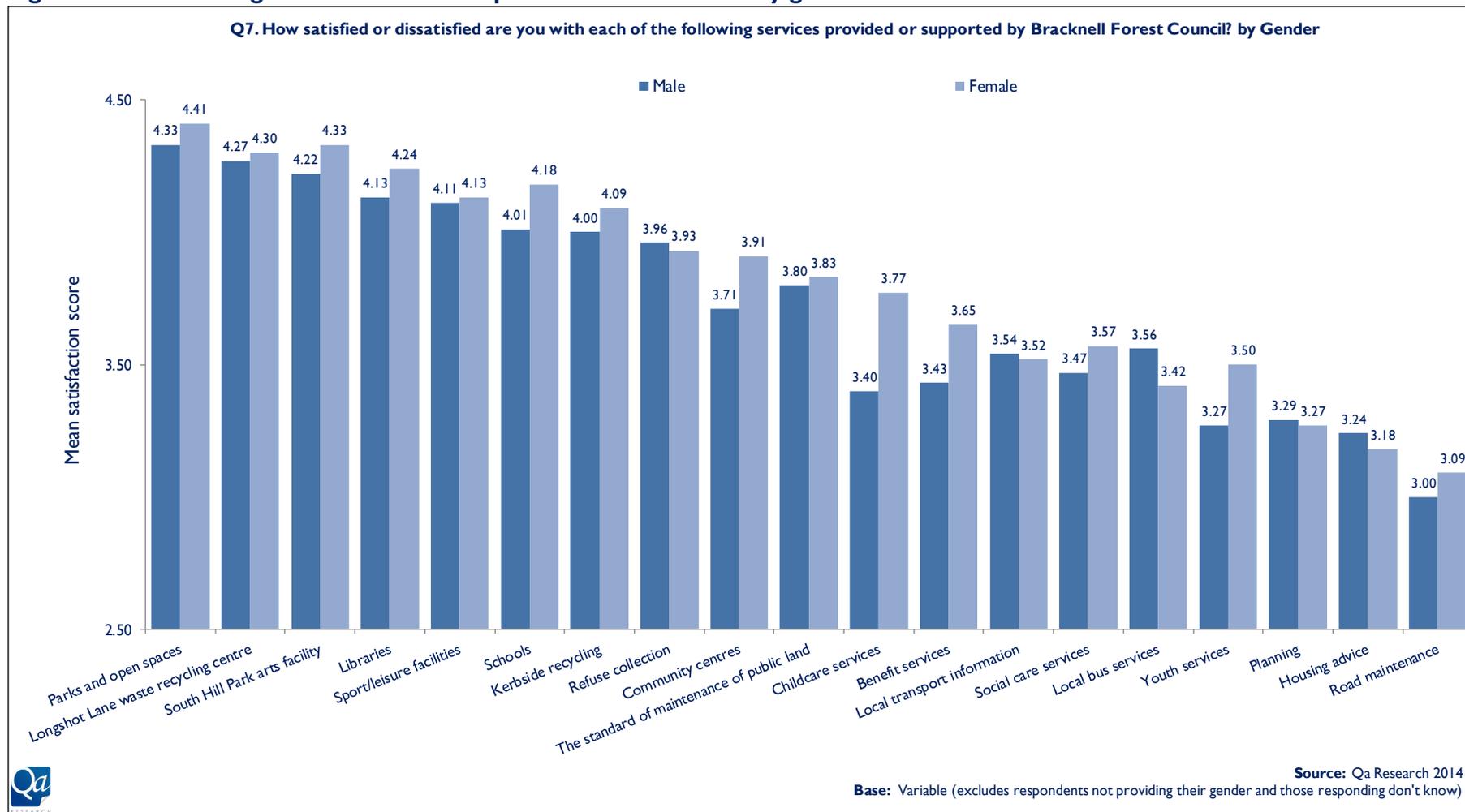
- 'schools' (4.18 vs. 4.01)
- 'community centres' (3.91 vs. 3.71)
- 'childcare services' (3.77 vs. 3.40)
- 'benefit services' (3.65 vs. 3.43)
- 'youth services' (3.50 vs. 3.27)

Three of these services, 'schools', 'community centres', 'childcare services', were significantly more likely to be used by female respondents than males, and there appears to be a trend whereby services that are used more often by females are rated more highly. The inverse, that services that males use more often are more highly rated by them, is not true however.

The only service that male respondents rated notably higher than female respondents was;

- 'local bus services' (3.56 vs. 3.42)

Figure 26. Mean rating of satisfaction with specific Council services by gender



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In the following chart the satisfaction ratings are stratified by age groups.

Figure 27. Mean rating of satisfaction with specific Council services by age

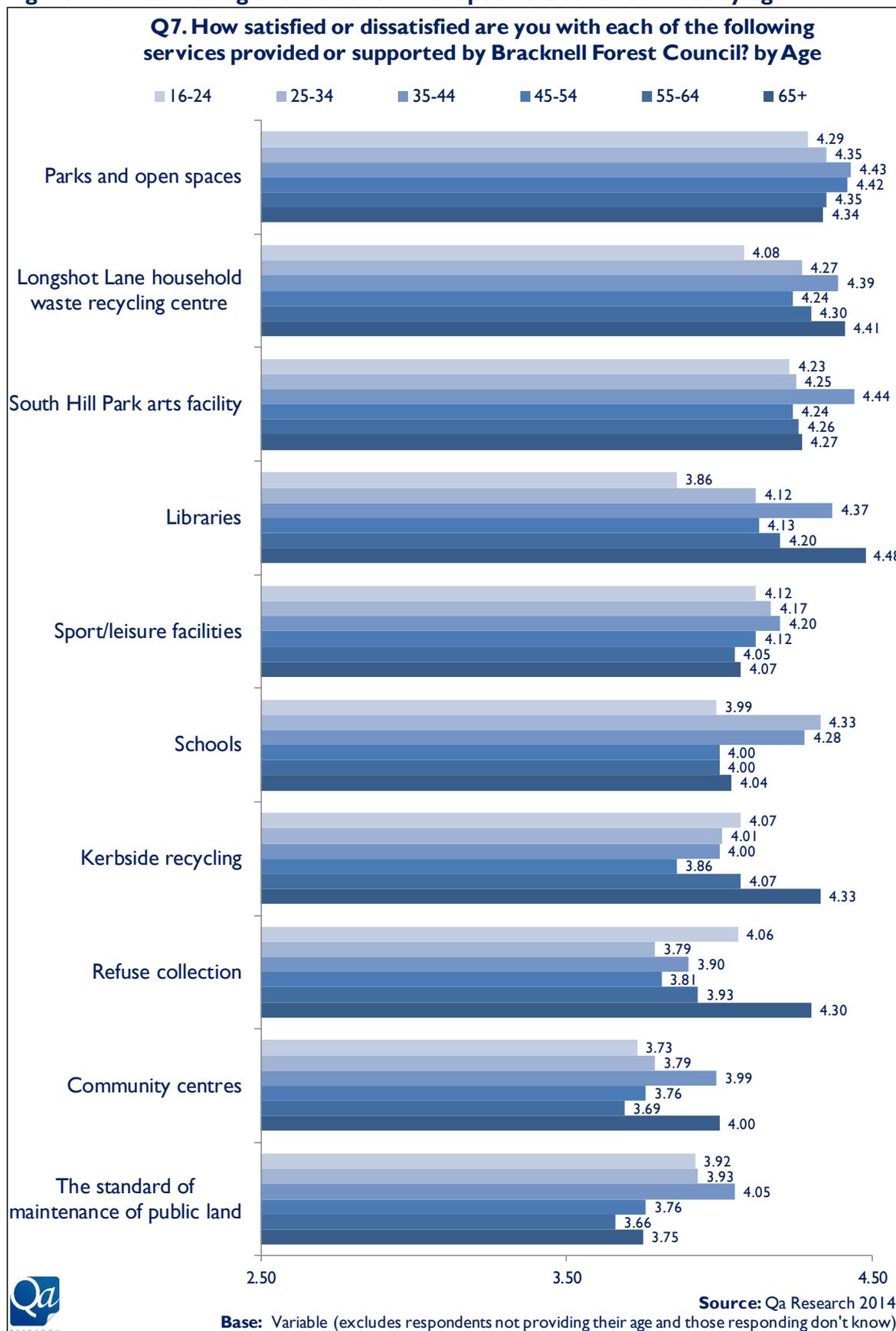
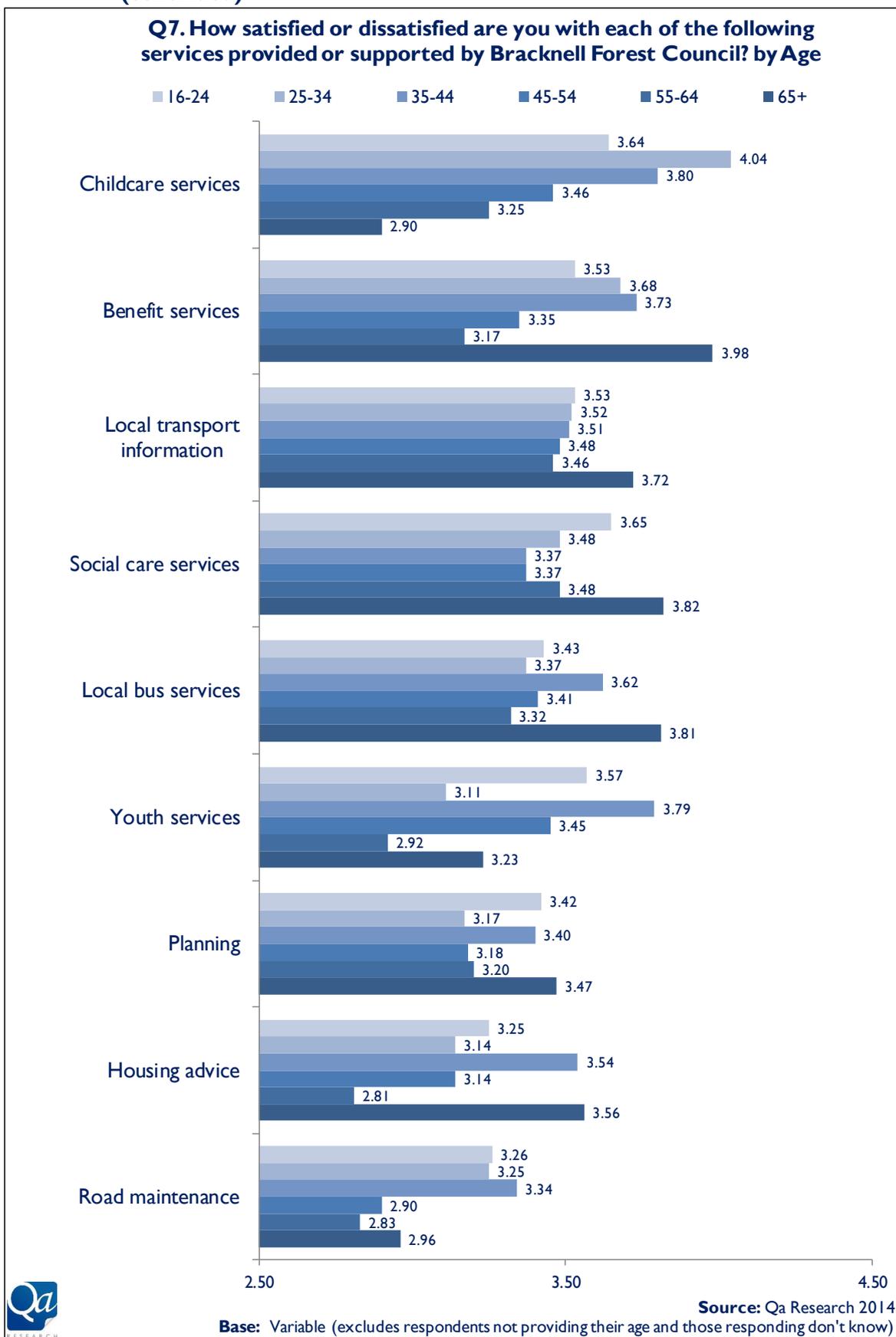


Figure 27. Mean rating of satisfaction with specific Council services by age (continued)



'Parks and open spaces' were the services with the highest overall level of satisfaction, and as the chart shows this level was consistently high amongst the various age groups, illustrating that this service has a universally high level of approval.

For some services the level of satisfaction varied considerably with age. The service with the most variation was 'childcare services' with a highest rating of 4.04 amongst those aged 25-34 and a lowest rating of 2.90 amongst those aged 65 and over. Satisfaction with 'childcare services' was highest amongst the age groups that are most likely to have young children (ages from 16-44), suggesting that satisfaction is higher amongst those use this service most often.

'Road maintenance', the service with which respondents were least satisfied overall, had much lower satisfaction scores amongst those aged 45 and over (45-54: 2.90, 55-64: 2.83, 65+: 2.96) than those aged under 45 (16-24: 3.26, 25-34: 3.25, 35-44: 3.34).

Overall, respondents aged 65 and over typically had the highest satisfaction scores. In contrast, those aged 55-64 often had the lowest satisfaction scores. It is unclear what would cause such a significant shift in attitudes between these two adjacent age groups.

It should be noted that as the mean scores excluded answers of 'don't know' the base size of services that had low levels of usage (see figure 20) will be quite small, especially when stratifying by age (six categories); because of this, the mean rating of satisfaction by age for the less used services should be treated with caution.

The chart on the following page shows the difference in mean satisfaction level between White British and BME respondents.

BME respondents were more satisfied than White British respondents with all but two services; and the difference was particularly marked for;

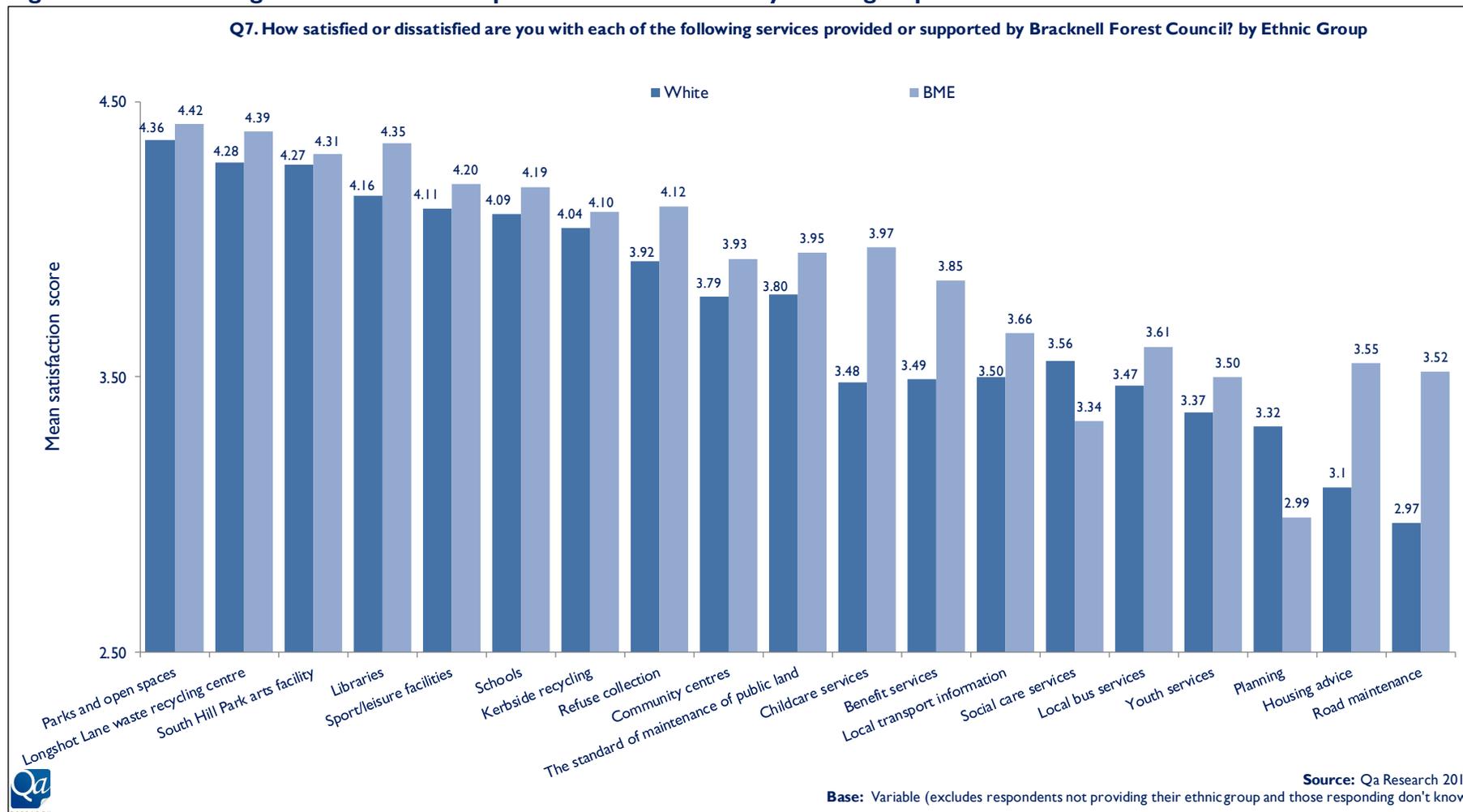
- 'childcare services' (3.97 vs. 3.48)
- 'benefit services' (3.85 vs. 3.49)
- 'housing advice' (3.55 vs. 3.10)
- 'road maintenance' (3.52 vs. 2.97)

The only two services for which White British respondents gave a higher mean satisfaction rating were 'social care services' (3.56 vs. 3.34) and 'planning' (3.32 vs. 2.99).

The consistently greater satisfaction of BME respondents mirrors that of female respondents. The gender split of BME and White British respondents was very even (White British: 49% male, 51% female; BME 51% male, 49% female), however, and therefore this has does not account for the near universal greater satisfaction of BME respondents.

Again, base sizes for the lesser used services will be small and so should be treated with caution. The smallest was 'childcare services' with a base for this service of 327; of which 28 are aged 65+ (the smallest age category) and 76 are from BME ethnicities.

Figure 28. Mean rating of satisfaction with specific Council services by ethnic group



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Stratified by ward, 'parks and open spaces' had the highest mean score in the majority of wards (highest in Bullbrook (4.53)). Where this was not the highest rated service, the following services were the highest rated:

- 'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre': Ascot (4.42), Binfield with Warfield (4.50), Great Hollands North (4.28)
- 'South Hill Park arts facilities': Crown Wood (4.42), Old Bracknell (4.44), Priestwood and Garth (4.32)
- 'Schools': Crowthorne (4.38)

There was a lot of variation in the lowest scoring service, although road maintenance was the most commonly mentioned (lowest in Owlsmoor (2.55)), with the following exceptions:

- 'Planning': Binfield with Warfield (2.87), Bullbrook (2.82), Hanworth (3.01), Harmans Water (3.05), Warfield Harvest Ride (3.30)
- 'Housing advice': Crowthorne (2.26), Little Sandhurst and Wellington (2.75), Old Bracknell (3.12)
- 'Youth services': College Town (3.16), Crown Wood (2.94)
- 'Local bus services': Winkfield and Cranbourne (2.68)

The top three scoring services in each ward are listed below;

Ascot

'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (4.42)
'Schools' (4.35)
'Libraries' (4.31)

Binfield with Warfield

'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (4.50)
'Parks and open spaces' (4.36)
'Libraries' (4.31)

Bullbrook

'Parks and open spaces' (4.53)
'South Hill Park arts facilities' (4.40)
'Libraries' (4.37)

Central Sandhurst

'Parks and open spaces' (4.46)
'Schools' (4.35)
'Sport/leisure facilities' (4.31)

College Town

'Parks and open spaces' (4.42)
'Libraries' (4.26)
'Sport/leisure facilities' (4.04)

Crown Wood

'South Hill Park arts facilities' (4.42)
'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (4.35)
'Parks and open spaces' (4.22)

Crowthorne

'Schools' (4.38)
'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (4.31)
'Parks and open spaces' (4.27)

Great Hollands North

'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (4.28)

'South Hill Park arts facilities' (4.44)

'Parks and open spaces' (4.23)

Great Hollands South

'Parks and open spaces' (4.48)

'South Hill Park arts facilities' (4.35)

'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (4.24)

Hanworth

'Parks and open spaces' (4.47)

'South Hill Park arts facilities' (4.32)

'Longshot Lane waste household recycling centre' (4.23)

Harmans Water

'Parks and open spaces' (4.40)

'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (4.31)

'Sport/leisure facilities' (4.24)

Little Sandhurst and Wellington

'Parks and open spaces' (4.36)

'Libraries' (4.25)

'South Hill Park arts facilities' (4.22)

Old Bracknell

'South Hill Park arts facilities' (4.44)

'Parks and open spaces' (4.41)

'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (4.31)

Owlsmoor

'Parks and open spaces' (4.30)

'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (4.27)

'South Hill Park arts facilities' (4.21)

Priestwood and Garth

'South Hill Park arts facilities' (4.32)

'Parks and open spaces' (4.15)

'Schools' (4.14)

Warfield Harvest Ride

'Parks and open spaces' (4.50)

'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (4.46)

'South Hill Park arts facilities' (4.44)

Wildridings and Central

'Parks and open spaces' (4.36)

'South Hill Park arts facilities' (4.35)

'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (4.19)

Winkfield and Cranbourne

'Parks and open spaces' (4.40)

'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (4.36)

'South Hill Park arts facilities' (4.34)

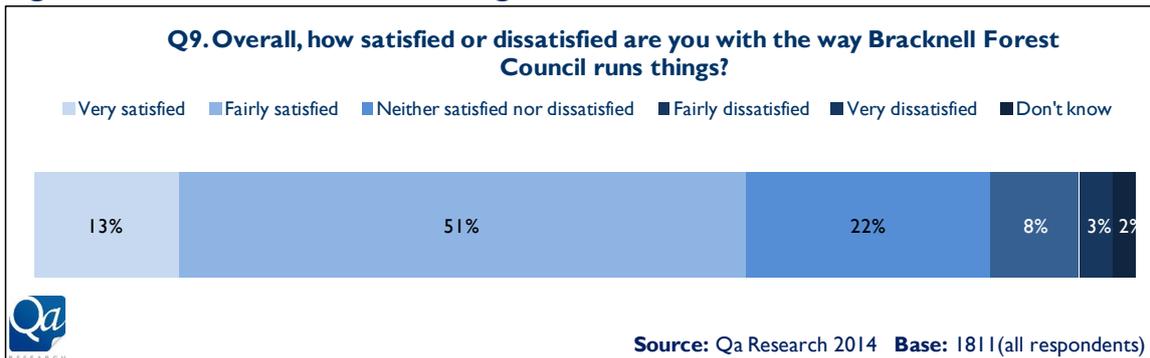
5.5 Perceptions of the Council overall

A number of questions were used to assess residents' satisfaction with the Council, including: overall satisfaction, perceptions of value for money offered by the Council and improvements the Council could make to the services it provides.

5.5.1 Satisfaction with the Council overall

The following chart demonstrates individuals' overall satisfaction with the way that the Council runs things.

Figure 29. Overall satisfaction rating of the Council



In total, almost two-thirds (65%) indicated that they were satisfied (either 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied') with the way the Council runs things, although respondents were more likely to indicate that they were 'fairly satisfied' (51%) rather than 'very satisfied' (13%).

Notably, more than a fifth said that they were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' (22%), but around one-in-ten indicated that they were dissatisfied (11%), although they were more likely to say they were 'fairly dissatisfied' (8%) rather than 'very dissatisfied' (3%).

Comparison with 2012;

A satisfaction figure of 65% represents a significant increase since 2012 when 60% indicated that they were either 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied'. This increase is mainly explained by a significant reduction in the proportion that was dissatisfied (11% vs. 14%).

This increase in satisfaction does appear to be a genuine trend, rather than simply a reflection of differences in the demographic profiles of the 2012 and 2014 samples.

For example, few differences exist between different demographic groups, although older respondents (aged 65+) are the most likely age group to be satisfied with the Council. The proportion of older respondents is actually lower in the 2014 research than the 2012 research, so the uplift in satisfaction year-on-year is not explained by differences in the age profile of each sample.

Generally, respondents feel satisfied with the Council if they believe that it 'provides value for money' and 87% who agreed that this was the case said they were satisfied with the Council compared to only 16% of those that disagreed. Specifically, more than half (55%) of those that disagreed actually expressed dissatisfaction with the way the Council runs things.

Ensuring that residents feel informed about the *'services and benefits'* the Council provides can also have an influence on driving satisfaction levels up, as those who did feel informed were significantly more likely than those that didn't to express satisfaction with the Council (75% vs. 44%). However, respondents who said that they did not feel informed were more likely to feel satisfied with the way the Council runs things than they were to feel dissatisfied (44% vs. 24%); so while clearly important to keep people informed, doing so does not appear to be essential to ensure that respondents are satisfied with how the Council is delivering and demonstrating that they get value for money is a more important driver of satisfaction.

Over the years residents' surveys have consistently identified a link between levels of satisfaction with the local council and other key indicators of satisfaction with the local area and this is the case here as well. In particular, respondents who were satisfied with their local area as a place to live were significantly more likely than those who were dissatisfied to say that they were satisfied with the way the Council runs things (69% vs. 28%) and in fact, almost half (47%) of those dissatisfied with their local area said they were also dissatisfied with the way the Council runs things. Additionally, respondents were more likely to feel satisfied with the Council if they agree rather than disagreed that they can *'influence decisions affecting your local area'* (81% vs. 52%).

Demographic differences

In 2012 it was noted that female respondents were more likely to be satisfied with the Council than males, but this is not the case in 2014 and no difference was recorded (65% and 65% respectively).

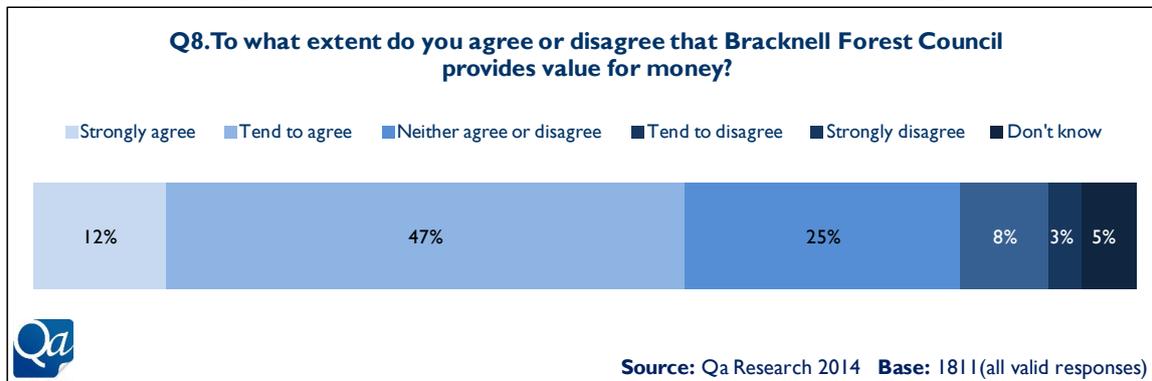
However, a trend common to both the 2014 and 2012 data is that older respondents are generally more satisfied with the Council and in 2014 71% of those aged 65+ said they were either *'fairly satisfied'* (51%) rather than *'very satisfied'*.

No differences between BME and White British respondents were recorded.

5.5.2 Perceptions on the value for money offered by the Council

The chart below shows levels of agreement that the Council provides value for money;

Figure 30. Perception of whether the Council offers value for money



The majority (59%) of respondents did agree that the Council provides value for money, although most said that they ‘tend to agree’ (47%) rather than ‘strongly agree’ (12%).

One-in-ten (10%) said that they disagreed that this was the case, but a quarter said that they ‘neither agree nor disagree’ (25%) and a further one-in-twenty (5%) said that they ‘don’t know’, perhaps suggesting that these respondents do not have sufficient information with which to make an assessment.

Comparison with 2012;

Here, a significant increase in the proportion that agree the Council provides value for money has been recorded in 2014 compared to 2012 (59% vs. 52%). More specifically, the proportion indicating that they ‘strongly agree’ has also increased significantly (12% vs. 8%).

As with the increase in satisfaction with the way the Council runs things, this uplift since 2012 does appear to be a genuine trend.

As noted earlier, agreement that the Council provides value for money and satisfaction with the way it runs things are very closely linked and here those that are satisfied are more likely to agree that it provides value for money than those that are dissatisfied (63% vs. 24%).

Also, if respondents agree they can ‘influence decisions affecting their local area’ they are more likely than those that disagree to also agree that the Council provides value for money (74% vs. 48%).

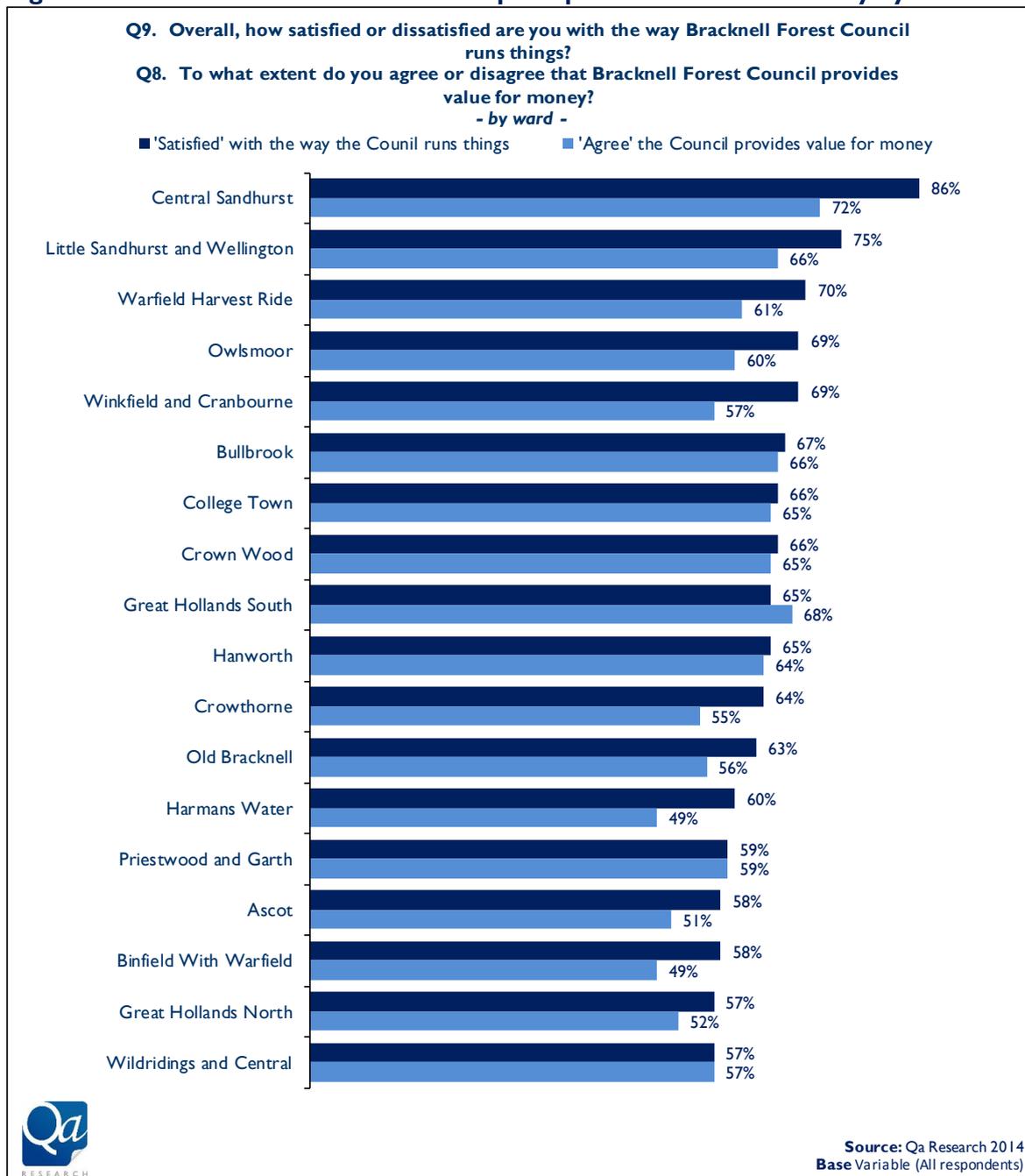
Demographic differences

Few differences between demographic groups were recorded here, but the oldest respondents (those aged 65+) were the most likely to agree that the Council provides value for money (70%); additionally, BME respondents were significantly more likely than White British ones to disagree that this is the case (15% vs. 10%).

It is also the case that the level of disagreement was higher amongst those who said they’d contacted their ‘Parish or Town Council during the past year’ compared to those that had not (17% vs. 9%).

The chart below shows the proportion of respondents in each ward that expressed satisfaction with the way the Council runs things and the proportion that agreed it provides value for money;

Figure 31. Satisfaction with Council and perceptions of value for money by ward

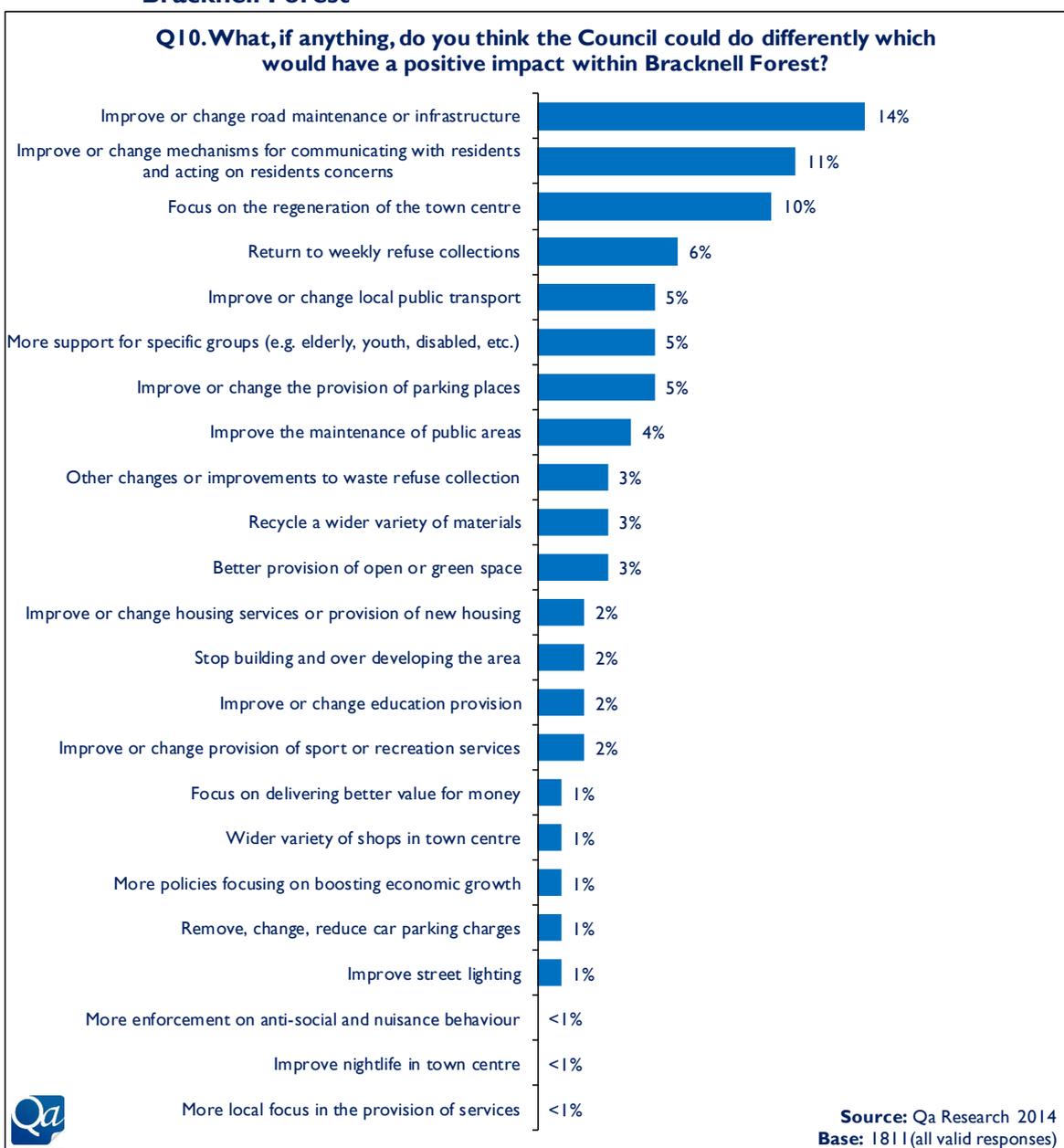


The link between these two measures is highlighted by the chart above, as those wards with the highest levels of satisfaction with the Council also tend to be the ones most likely to agree that it provide value for money. Specifically, the highest level of satisfaction and the highest level of agreement was recorded amongst respondents in Central Sandhurst (86% and 72% respectively). The second highest level of satisfaction was recorded in Little Sandhurst and Wellington and a comparatively high level of agreement as also recorded (75% and 66% respectively). In contrast, relatively low levels of satisfaction and agreement were recorded in Binfield with Warfield (58% and 49% respectively), Ascot (58% and 51% respectively) and Great Hollands North (57% and 52% respectively) amongst others.

5.5.3 Suggestions for improving the Council

Respondents were asked ‘*what, if anything, do you think the Council could do differently which would have a positive impact within Bracknell Forest*’ and this was a completely open question, with answers recorded verbatim. Similar answers have been coded into themes and the chart below shows these codes – note that this chart is only based on respondents who gave an answer at this question;

Figure 32. Things the Council could do differently which would positively impact on Bracknell Forest



In total, 72% suggested an improvement at this question and the types of issues mentioned were in line with those mentioned in 2012.

Respondents were most likely to make suggestions relating to the need to ‘*improve or change road maintenance or infrastructure*’ (19%) (a significantly higher proportion than that recorded in 2012 – 14%) and this included the following example verbatim responses;

“Fix the potholes on the roads. Fix the street lights. Maintain roadside hedges.”

“There aren’t paths by many of the roads so people have to walk on the grass or the road if [it’s] wet. A lot of children walk to school along here, so it is particularly unsafe.”

Additionally, just over one-in-twenty (7%) made a comment relating to the need to ‘*improve or change local public transport*’ such as the following;

“Sort out provision of bus services as there are two companies. No interchange with return tickets.”

“The council could improve bus service in the area, we have buses that come into this area 2 days a week. For people who do not drive its taxis everywhere which is very expensive plus we have an au pair for our home and she cannot get here without taxi.”

The mostly frequently recorded suggestions in 2012 related to the need to ‘*focus on regeneration of town centre*’ which was mentioned by 19% and fewer respondents made these types of comment in 2014 (14%) but they included the following which this year perhaps suggest more of an emphasis on getting the regeneration finished;

“Speed up town centre regeneration.”

“Regenerate town centre - in progress but taking too long.”

Respondents also talked about the need to ‘*improve or change mechanisms for communicating with residents and acting on residents concerns*’ (15%) and comments here included the following;

“...we could do with more information on things that are changing and what our choices are. We used to have people knocking on our door asking our views, however not so much now. Things just happen and we have to except it. Most things are advertised on the internet on their website, but for people that are not computer literate it’s difficult, [and] for certain generations as not everyone has computers.”

One-in-twenty (7%) also made a comment regarding the need for ‘*more support for specific groups (e.g. elderly, youth, disabled, etc.)*’ such as the following;

“More facilities for teenagers and young adults; more entertainment services/youth clubs.”

“Better provision for learning disabled people - more carers for disabled people and more courses available for learning disabled people. More funding for local charities/volunteers (ARK organisation).”

Comparison with 2012;

Comparisons between responses given to fully open questions should always be treated with caution, but apart from the lower proportion making reference to the need to ‘*focus on the regeneration of the town centre*’ and the higher proportion mentioning the need to ‘*improve or change road maintenance or infrastructure*’ noted above, some year-on-year differences are apparent.

Continued....

Specifically, significantly fewer mentions of the need to ‘*improve maintenance of public areas*’ were recorded (5% vs. 14%) and respondents were also less likely to mention the need to ‘*recycle a wider variety of materials*’ (4% vs. 8%).

Respondents in 2014 were also less likely to mention that they’d like to see ‘*more enforcement on anti-social and nuisance behaviour*’ (<1% vs. 5%).

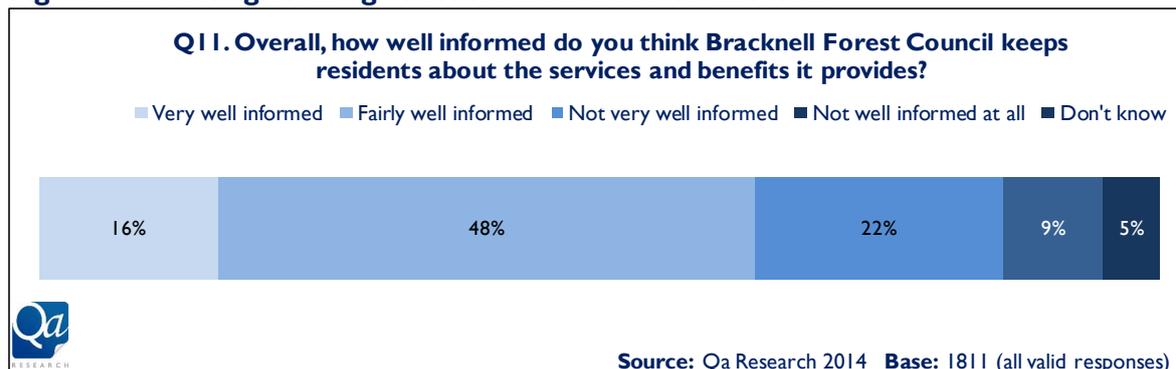
5.6 Communication with the Council

In the penultimate section of key findings the means by which residents communicate with the Council are explored, alongside preferences for that communication.

5.6.1 Feelings of being informed about Council services

Residents were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt informed about the Council and the services and benefits it provides. The following chart demonstrates the results.

Figure 33. Feeling of being informed about Council services



Two thirds (64%) of respondents feel well informed (net: ‘*very well informed*’ and ‘*fairly well informed*’) about the services and benefits provided by Bracknell Forest Council. Just under one third (31%) felt not informed (net: ‘*not very well informed*’ and ‘*not well informed at all*’), although one-in-ten respondents (9%) did indicate that they felt ‘*not well informed at all*’.

Respondents who felt well informed were significantly more likely to agree that they could influence decisions affecting their local area (49%) compared to those who felt that they were not informed (26%).

Well informed respondents were also more likely than those who felt not informed to be satisfied with their local area as a place to live (91% vs. 80%) and satisfied with the way Bracknell Forrest Council runs things (75% vs. 44%).

Comparison to 2012;

There has been essentially no change in the overall level of how informed residents feel since 2012. Then, as in 2014, two thirds (64%) of respondents felt well informed and just under one third (29%) felt not informed; there has been no significant change in either of these figures.

Continued...

The distribution of how well informed people feel has change slightly however; a significantly higher proportion of respondents in 2014 felt 'very well informed' (16%) compared to 2012 (10%). A significantly greater proportion in 2014 also felt 'not well informed at all' (2014: 9%, 2012: 6%. Therefore it would seem that respondents are becoming polarised into those who feel completely and not at all informed, despite the overall level remaining static.

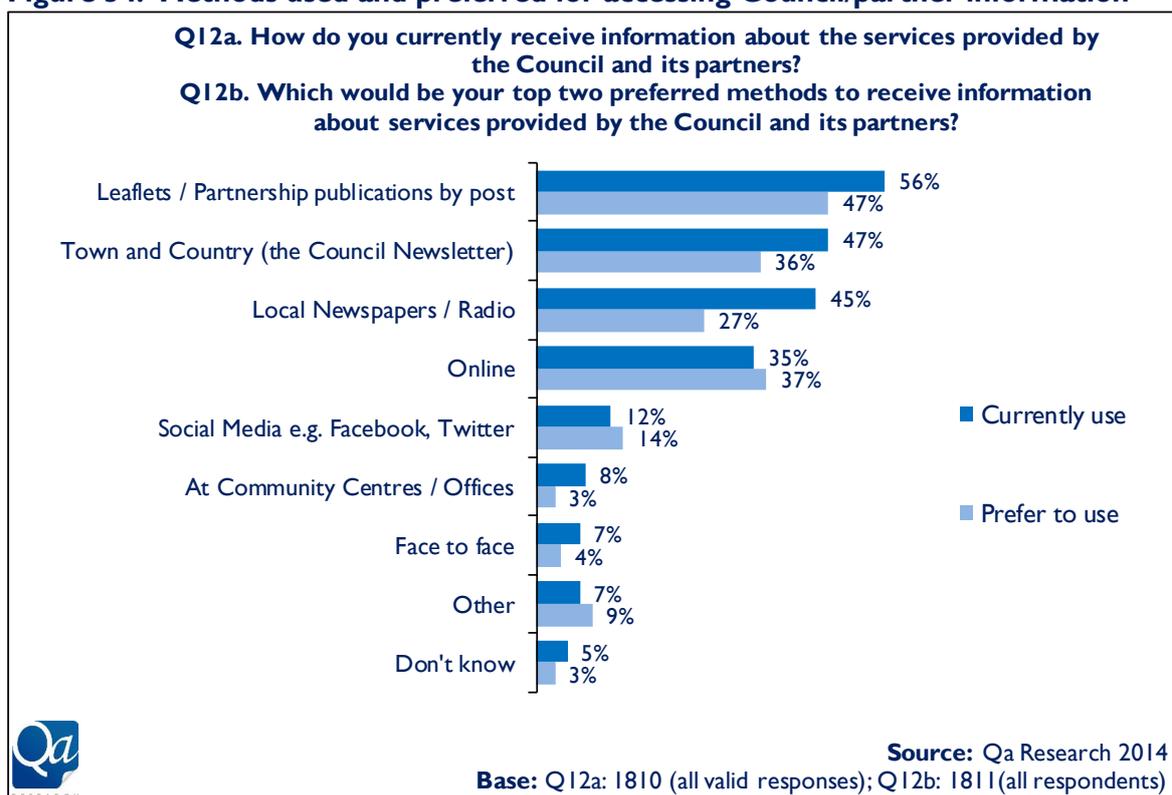
Demographic differences

Male respondents were more likely to feel well informed (67%) than female (62%), but aside from this there were no other notable significant differences between demographic groups.

5.6.2 Methods for receiving information and preference for receiving information

Respondents were asked how they currently received information about Council and partner services, and what their preferred method of receiving information would be. Respondents were allowed to select as many communication sources as they used, but were limited to their top two preferred ways of accessing information. The results are shown in the chart below;

Figure 34. Methods used and preferred for accessing Council/partner information



The three most common methods for accessing information about services provided by the Council and its partners were 'leaflets / partnership publications by post' (56%), the 'Town and Country newsletter' (47%) and 'local newspapers / radio' (45%). The mean average number of methods used was 2.25. While 'online' was the fourth most common mechanism for accessing information, given by just over a third of respondents (35%), it was the second most preferred method of accessing information (mentioned by 37%), and while not as used as 'leaflets / partnership publications by post' and the 'Town and Country newsletter', accessing information 'online' was preferred over local media such as 'local newspapers / radio'.

Comparison to 2012;

Despite being the top three most used options in both 2012 and 2014, there has been a significant decrease in the proportion of respondents currently using 'leaflets / partnership publications by post' (down from 64% to 56%), the 'Town and Country newsletter' (down from 68% to 47%), and 'local newspapers / radio' (down from 60% to 45%). In contrast the proportion using 'online;' and 'social media' means of communication has increased significantly (from 30% to 36% and from 5% to 12% respectively). This is perhaps unsurprising as preference for these methods was greater than usage in 2012; however it also likely linked to the greater proportion of younger respondents in the 2014 sample compared to 2012.

Demographic differences

Male respondents were significantly more likely than female to currently access information 'online' (39% vs. 34%), but were no more likely to cite this as a preferred method. Indeed, the only difference in terms of preference by gender was that female respondents were more likely to prefer to access information through the 'Town and Country newsletter' (38%) than males (34%).

This stands in contrast to 2012 where there were many more differences between the usage and preferences of male and female respondents, and this likely to be due to differing age profile of males and females in 2014 compared to 2012. In 2012 this was consistently around 50% male and 50% female regardless of age, however in 2012, respondents aged 54 and under were significantly more likely to be female (16-24: 82%, 25-34: 72%, 35-44: 67%, 45-54: 60%).

Respondents who were White British were significantly more likely to use 'leaflets / partnership publications by post' (61% vs. 46%) and the 'Town and Country newsletter' (54% vs. 27%) than BME respondents. White British respondents also accessed significantly more sources of information on average (2.32) than BME respondents (1.84).

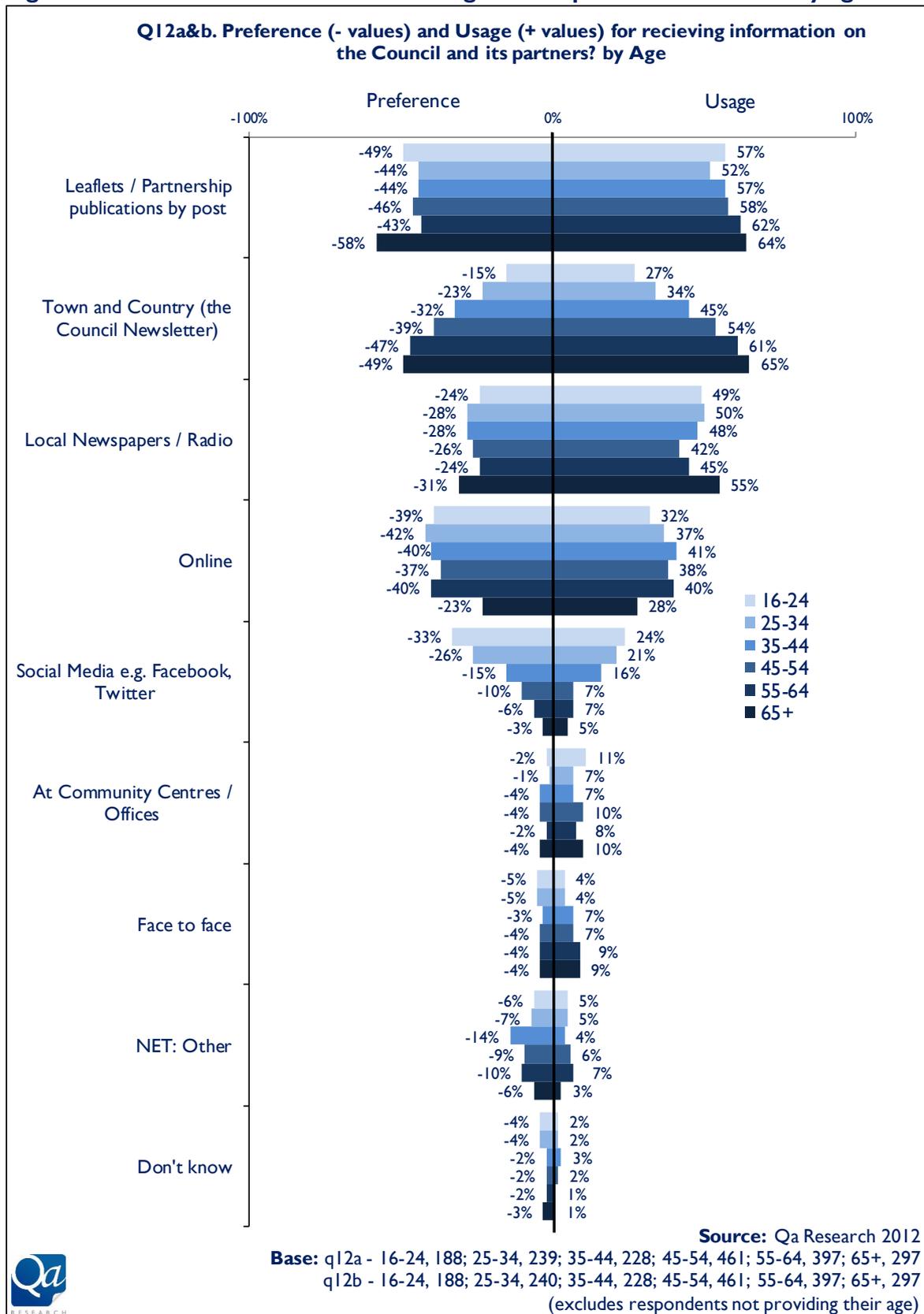
BME respondents also showed a significantly greater preference for 'local newspapers / radio' (36% vs. 25%) and 'face-to-face' (7% vs. 4%) compared to White British respondents; despite this, there is no significant difference between the levels of current usage by ethnicity. This may suggest that there are currently barriers to BMEs accessing information using these methods.

There were some significant differences in use of information sources and preference for information sources by age. These are shown on the chart on the following page; the negative values represent each age group's preference for the given information source, with the positive values representing the current use of these information sources by age group.

Both usage of and preference for the 'Town and Country newsletter' increased with age, with the oldest age group (65+) having over twice the usage of the youngest (16-24) (65% vs. 27%) and over three times the preference (15% vs. 49%). The inverse was true for 'social media' with both usage of and preference for this decreasing as age increased. The youngest age group had almost five times the usage compared to the oldest (24% c. 5%), and a considerable eleven times the level of preference (33% vs. 3%).

This pattern is not present in preference and usage of 'online' information sources, which is more consistent across the age groups with the exception of those aged 65 and over. This group had significantly lower levels of preference (23%) and usage (28%) than other groups. Those aged 16-24 had what might be lower than expected usage of 'online' information services (32%, higher than only those aged 65 and over), given that they had the highest usage of 'social media'. The 16-24 aged group had the greatest different in levels of preference over usage (7 percentage points; 39% over 32%), however, which suggests that online methods currently used do not engage with this age group.

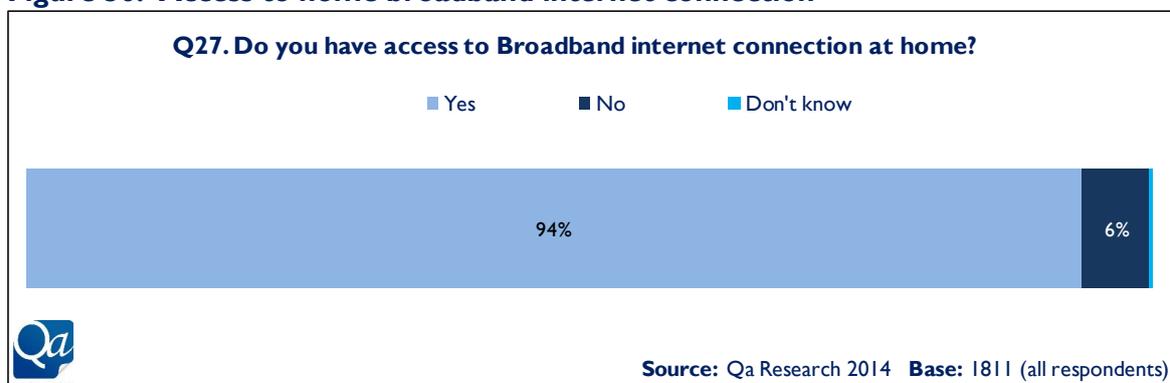
Figure 35. Preference and use for receiving Council/partner information by age



5.6.3 Residents' access to home broadband

This subsection of the explores residents' access to broadband internet at their home. The proportion that does have access is shown in the chart below;

Figure 36. Access to home broadband internet connection



The vast majority of respondents indicated that they had a broadband internet connection at their home (94%). Only one-in-seventeen (6%) did not.

Comparison to 2012;

The proportion of respondents with a broadband internet connection has increased since 2012, where 83% of respondents had a broadband connection.

Part of this increase may due to the more representative 2014 sample however; respondents aged 65 and over were overrepresented in 2012 and this group is significantly less likely to have broadband access than any other, which may have artificially decreased the 2012 figure.

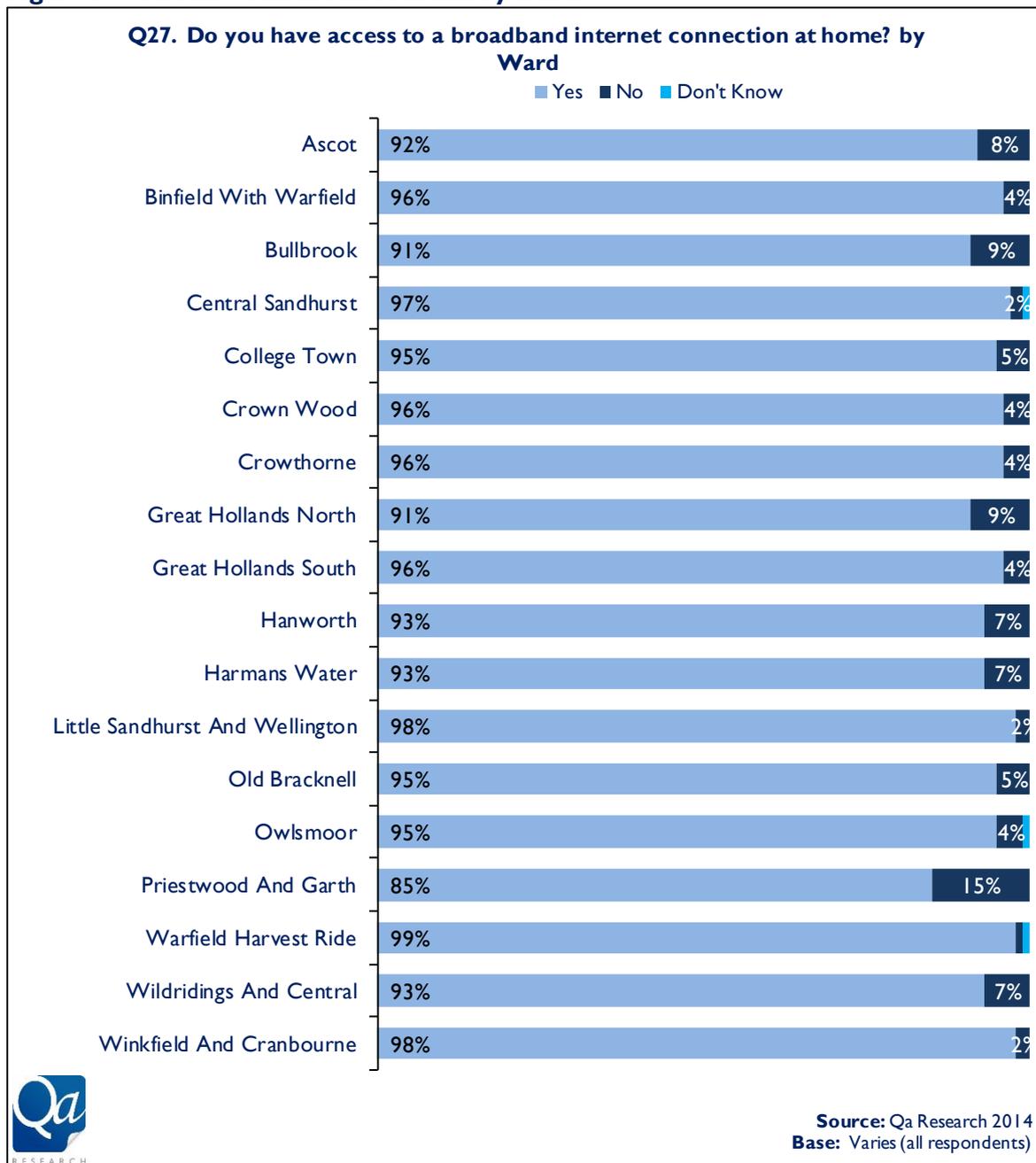
Demographic differences

Those aged 65 and over were significantly less likely to have a broadband internet connection (78%) than any other age group (all 97% except for 16-24: 98%).

There were no other differences by demographic subgroups.

The chart on the following page shows the breakdown of broadband access by ward.

Figure 37. Access to home broadband by ward



Priestwood and Garth had the lowest proportion of residents with a broadband connection (85%), although in absolute terms the proportion with a broadband connection is still very high. Respondents in Warfield Harvest Ride were those most likely to have home broadband access (99% had access).

This mirrors the findings of 2012 where, as in 2014, Priestwood and Garth had the lowest (72%) and Warfield Harvest Ride the highest (93%) proportion of respondents with home broadband access.

5.7 Contact and satisfaction with Town and Parish Councils

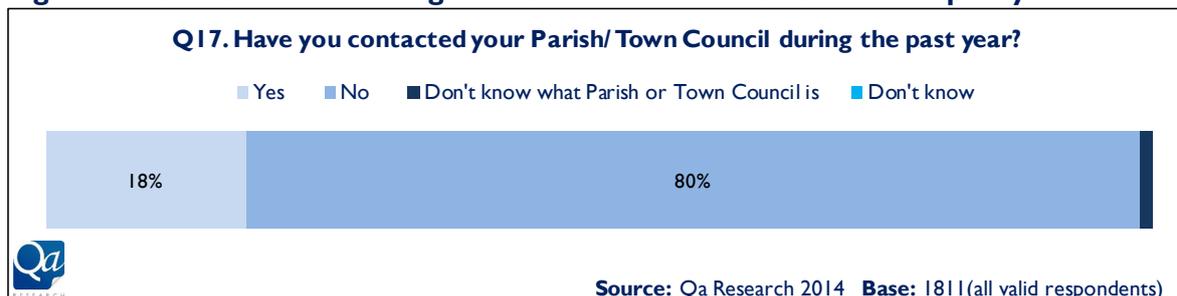
The final section of the key findings explores respondents' relationship with their Town or Parish Council, and also their interest in becoming more involved in the decision making in their area.

5.7.1 Contact with and awareness of the services provided by Town and Parish Councils

This subsection of the report concerns respondents' contact with their Town and Parish Council, along with their awareness of the services they provide locally.

The following chart demonstrates the proportion of respondents who have contacted their Town or Parish Council in the past 12 months.

Figure 38. Residents contacting their Parish/Town Council over the past year



The majority (80%) of respondents had not contacted their Parish or Town Council in the past 12 months; only just less than one fifth (18%) has done so. Lack of awareness of the Parish or Town Council is not the cause of this, as only a negligible proportion (1%) of respondents said they 'don't know what the Parish or Town Council is'.

Comparison to 2012;

This is a significant decrease from 2012, where almost one third (30%) of respondents had contacted their Parish or Town Council during the past year.

Some of this decrease is driven by the lower proportion of older respondents in the 2014 sample, as respondents aged 35 and over are more likely to have contacted their Parish or Town Council. However, a decline in the proportion that have contacted was recorded in 2014 compared to 2012 amongst all age groups including those aged 16-24 (5% vs. 24%), 25-34 (15% vs. 31%) and also older aged groups such as 55-64 (20% vs. 29%) and 65+ (19% vs. 32%).

It's possible that this decline is in part explained by the different methodology in 2014 and the self-selecting nature of 2012 respondents in particular. In particular, residents who are inclined to complete postal surveys may be more likely to contact their local Parish or Town Council, although no data is available to confirm this.

Demographic differences

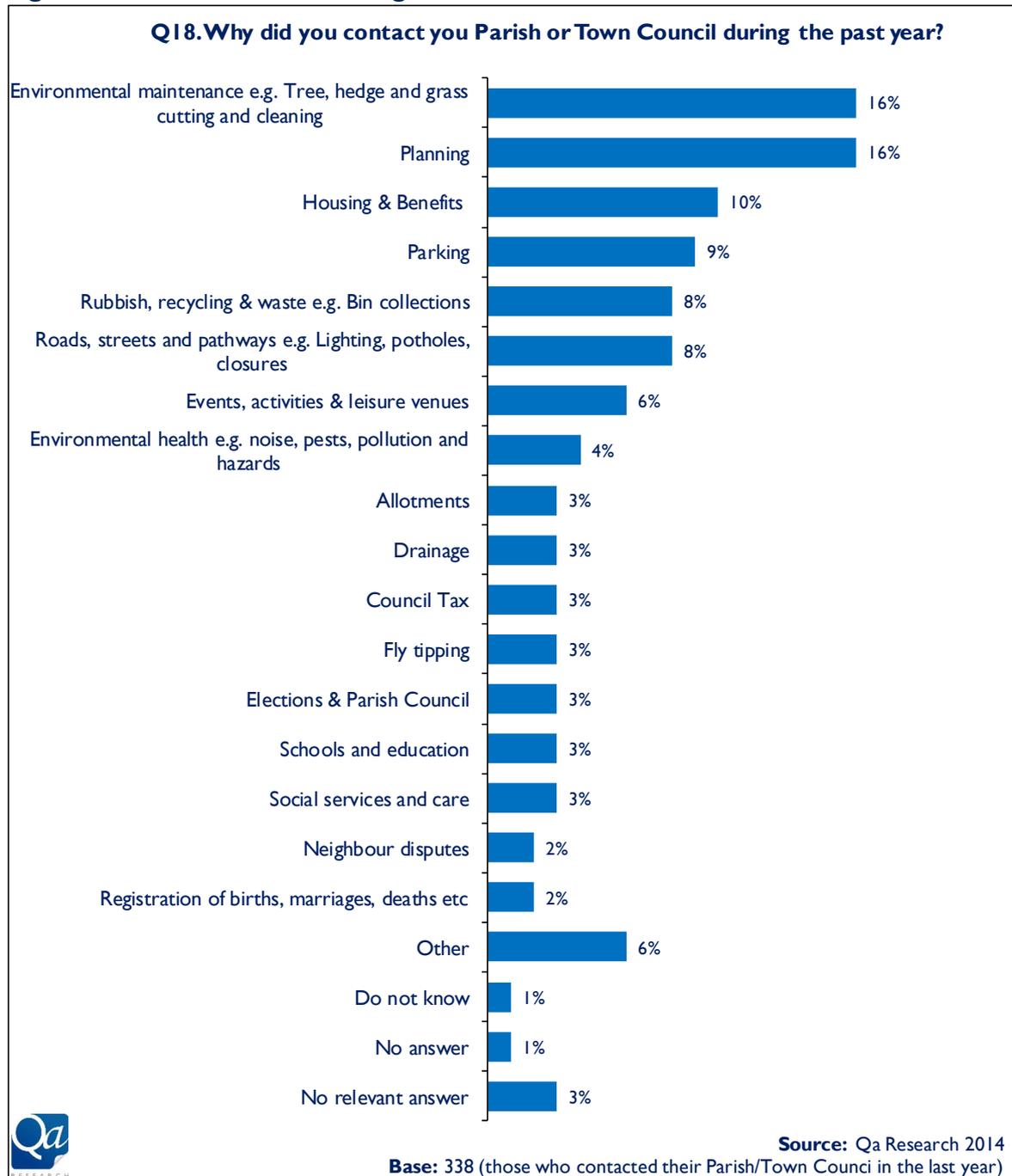
Female respondents were significant more likely to have contacted their Parish or Town Council in the past 12 months (20%) than male respondents (16%), although the proportion doing so still remains low.

By age, respondents aged 35-44 were the most likely to have contacted their Parish or Town Council (26%); those aged 16-24 were the least likely (5%).

White British respondents were also more likely have contacted their Parish or Town Council (19%) when compared to BME respondents (12%).

Respondents who indicated that they had contacted their Parish or Town Council over the last year were asked what their reason for making contact was. Answers were recorded verbatim and coded into thematic categories prior to analysis. The results are shown in the chart below;

Figure 39. Reasons for contacting Parish or Town Council



The wide range of differing reasons for contacting a Town or Parish Council, and the fact that no one reason dominates, suggests that there is no single over-riding issue which drives contact with local Parish and Town Councils.

Selected verbatim comments for the top two reasons are reproduced on the following page.

The most frequently made comments related to 'environmental maintenance' (16%) such as vegetation and ensuring this was kept under control. Sample comments included;

"Regarding keeping pathways clear from uncut bushes and trees, and keeping paths clean from pine needles for mobility scooters"

"I tried to get some obstructive bushes cut down"

A number of comments in this category also made reference to the removal of dead animals (badgers, foxes, deer), and to reporting issues with fouling.

There were some occasions where respondents had been critical of the Town or Parish Council's response to their enquiry;

"I wanted some trees and bushes cut at the back of my garden; I received a reply approximately two months ago saying this would get done, however up to today this still has not taken place"

"An alleyway between estates was overgrown and overridden with pests - now infested again - it was dealt with but took a long time"

Many comments relating to 'planning' (16%) involved contacting the Town or Parish Council to make a complaint;

"To complain about location of proposed housing"

"It was a complaint about a fence someone had put up"

"Planning permission was put in to build houses and I was against it"

"Complained about the change in the fly path of planes"

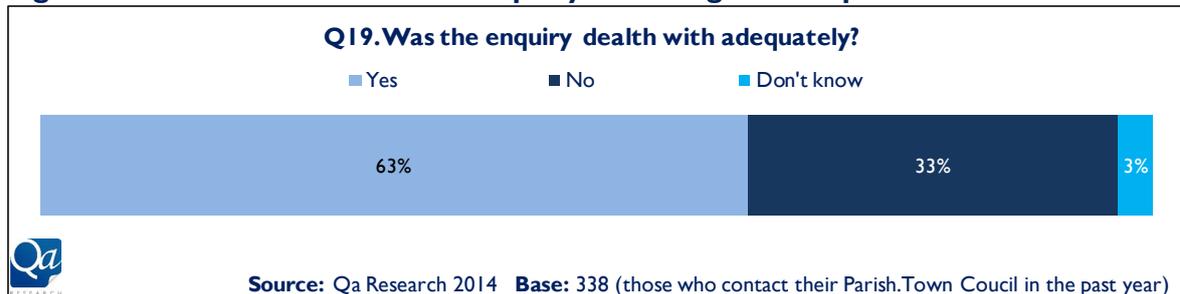
A significant number of other comments were about planning permission, although the respondents did not specify what exactly this referred to.

Demographic differences

The small base size for this question precludes analysis by sub-groups.

Respondents who had contacted their Parish or Town Council in the past 12 months were then asked if their enquiry had been dealt with adequately. Results are shown in the chart below;

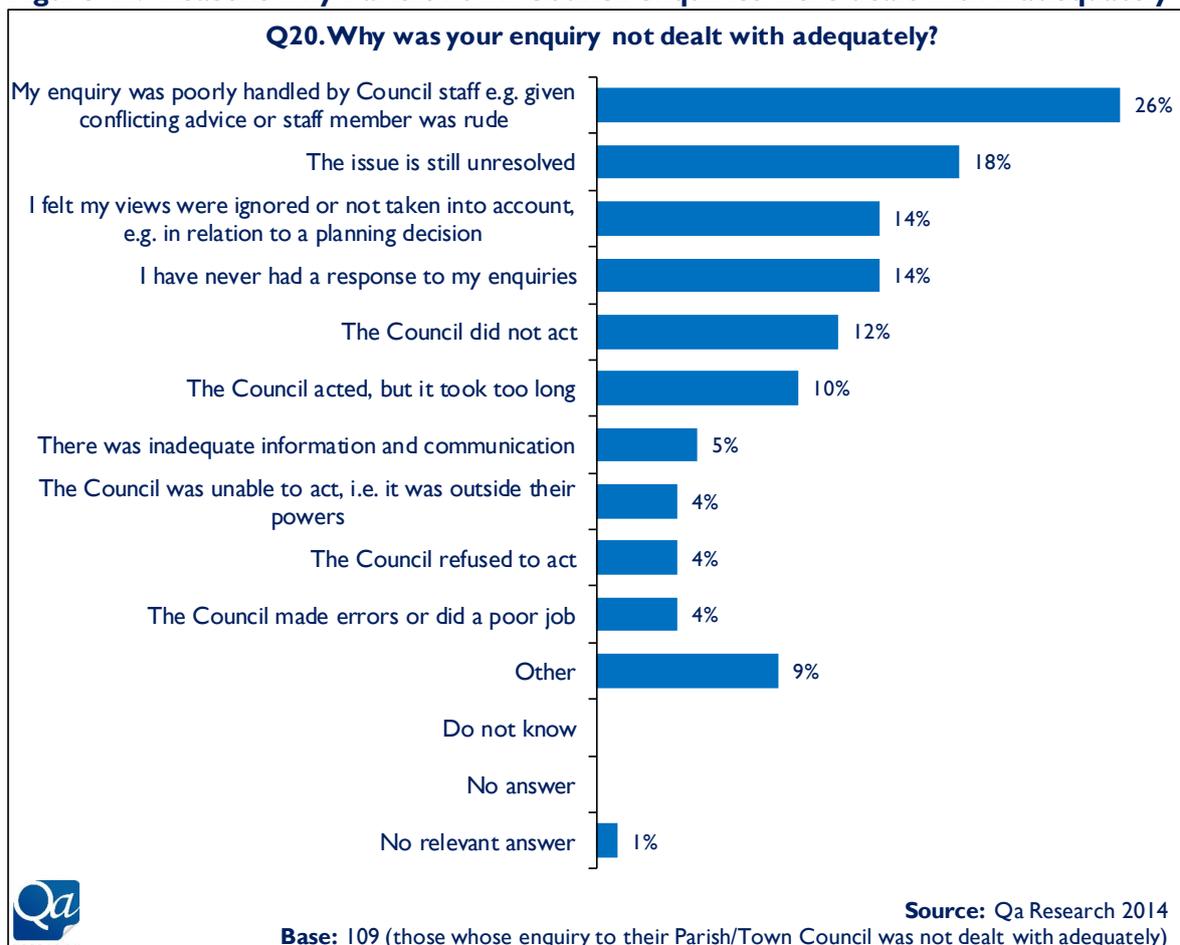
Figure 40. Parish/Town Council adequacy in dealing with enquiries



Two thirds (63%) of respondents indicated that their enquiry to their Parish or Town Council had been dealt with adequately. Although this represents the majority, it still leaves one-in-three enquires (33%) being dealt with inadequately.

Respondents who indicated that their enquiry had been dealt with inadequately were asked why this was the case; answers were recorded verbatim and coded into categories shown below;

Figure 41. Reasons why Parish/Town Council enquiries were dealt with inadequately



The perception that the respondent's enquiry 'was handled poorly' (26%) by the Parish or Town Council was the principal cause of respondents feeling that enquires had not been dealt with adequately.

All respondents were then asked if they were aware of the local services being provided by their Parish or Town Council. Results are shown in the chart below;

Figure 42. Understanding of the services provided by Parish/Town Councils locally



Just over a third of respondents (35%) were aware of the local services provided by their Parish or Town Council, however the majority were still not aware of these services (62%).

Comparison to 2012;

This represents a significant decrease since 2012, where nearly half (45%) of respondents were aware of the services provided locally. Therefore, not only has the proportion of people who contacted their Parish or Town Council decreased but awareness of the services they provide has also decreased.

However, both these decreases may in part be due to the more representative sample in the 2014 survey; the two youngest age groups (16-24 and 25-34) both have much lower levels of awareness and contact with their Parish or Town Council and these were underrepresented in the 2012. Therefore, these decreases should be treated with caution.

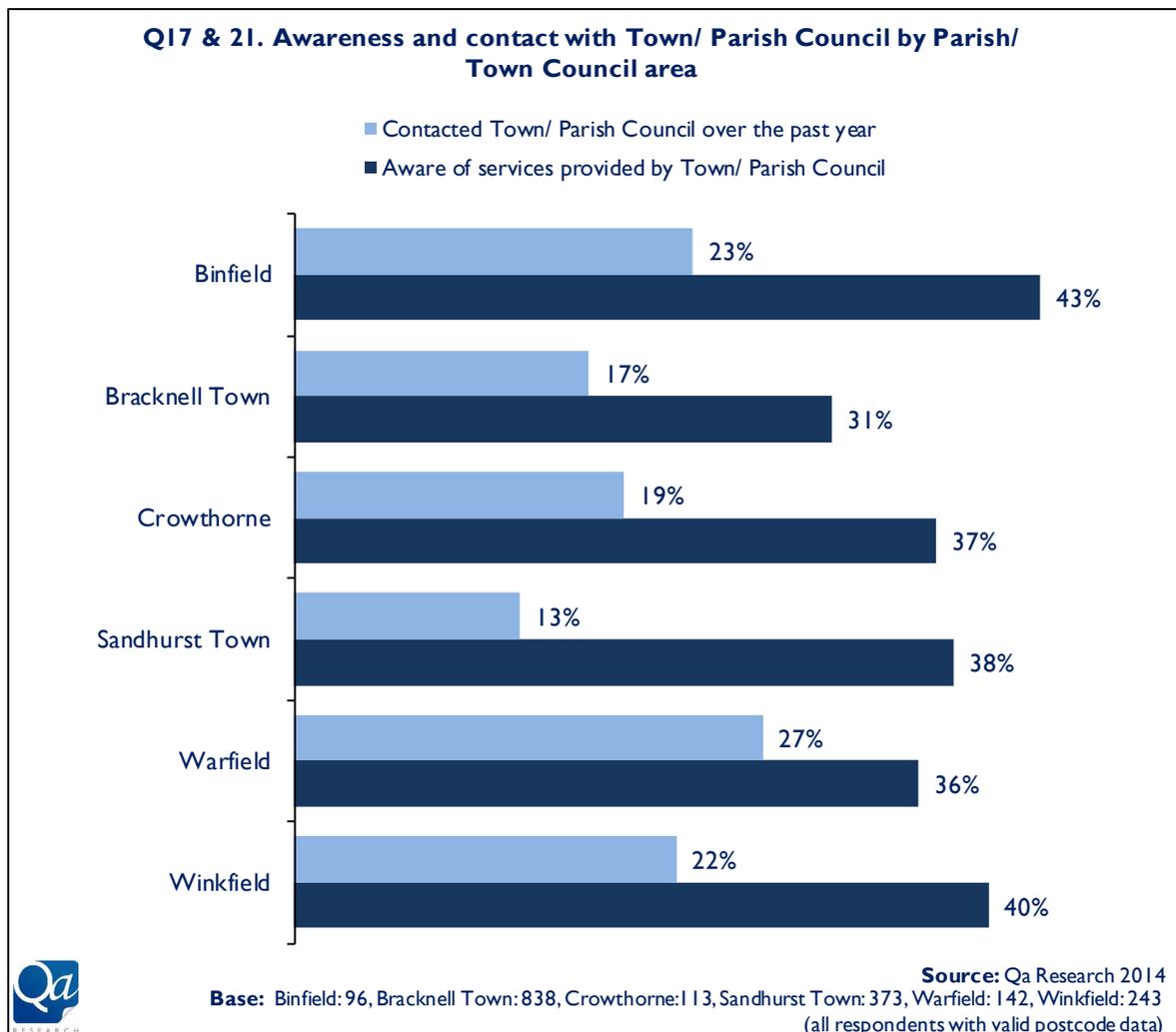
Demographic differences

Respondents aged between 16-24 were significantly less likely (25%) than those aged over 35 to be aware of the locally provided services (35-44: 38%, 45-54: 38%, 55-64: 35%, 65+: 40%).

There were no other differences by demographic subgroups.

The following chart shows the proportion of respondents who have contacted and who are aware of the services provided by their Parish or Town Council by Parish or Town Council areas.

Figure 43. Awareness and contact with Town/Parish Councils by Parish/Town Council area



Respondents from Sandhurst Town were significantly less likely to have contacted their Town or Parish Council (13%) than those from Binfield (23%), Warfield (27%, the highest level of contact), and Winkfield (22%).

A low level of making contact with the local Parish or Town Council does not correlate² to the awareness of the services provided by that Council. Respondents from Sandhurst Town may have the lowest rate of contacting their Council, but they have the third highest awareness of the services they provide (38%), second only to Binfield (43%, the highest level of awareness) and Winkfield (40%).

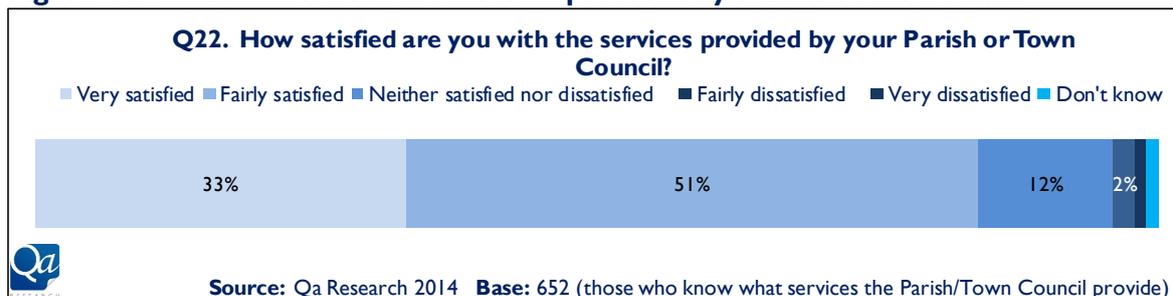
² Correlation coefficient = 0.277 (very weak positive correlation)

5.7.2 Satisfaction with the services provided by Parish or Town Councils

This subsection explores the satisfaction of respondent with services provided to them by their local Parish or Town Council. All questions in this subsection were asked only of those who were 'aware' of the services provided by their local council (Q21); this was 35% of the total sample.

Respondents were asked to indicate their satisfaction with the services provided by their Parish or Town Council on a five point scale ranging from 'very dissatisfied' to 'very satisfied'. The results are shown in the following chart;

Figure 44. Satisfaction with the services provided by Parish/Town Council



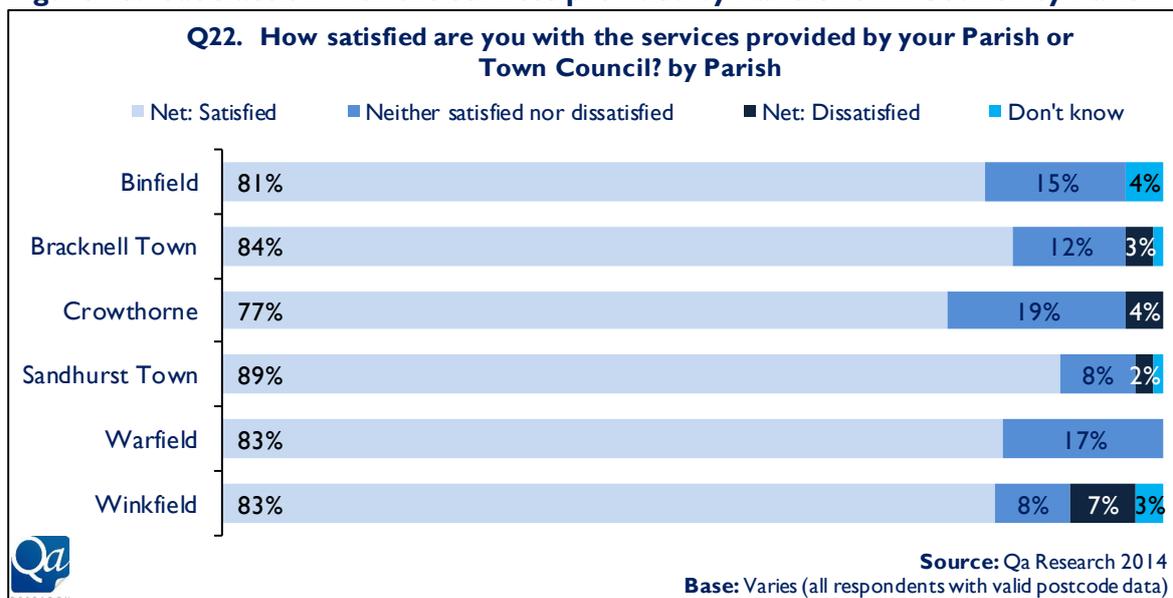
The majority (84%) of respondents were satisfied with the services provided by their Parish or Town Council, although respondents were more likely to be 'fairly satisfied' (51%) than 'very satisfied' (33%). Only a negligible proportion (3%) were dissatisfied.

Significantly more respondents who were satisfied with their local area as place to live were satisfied with the services provided by their local council (88%), compared to those dissatisfied with their local area (44%); this suggests a positive correlation between these two measures.

Demographic differences

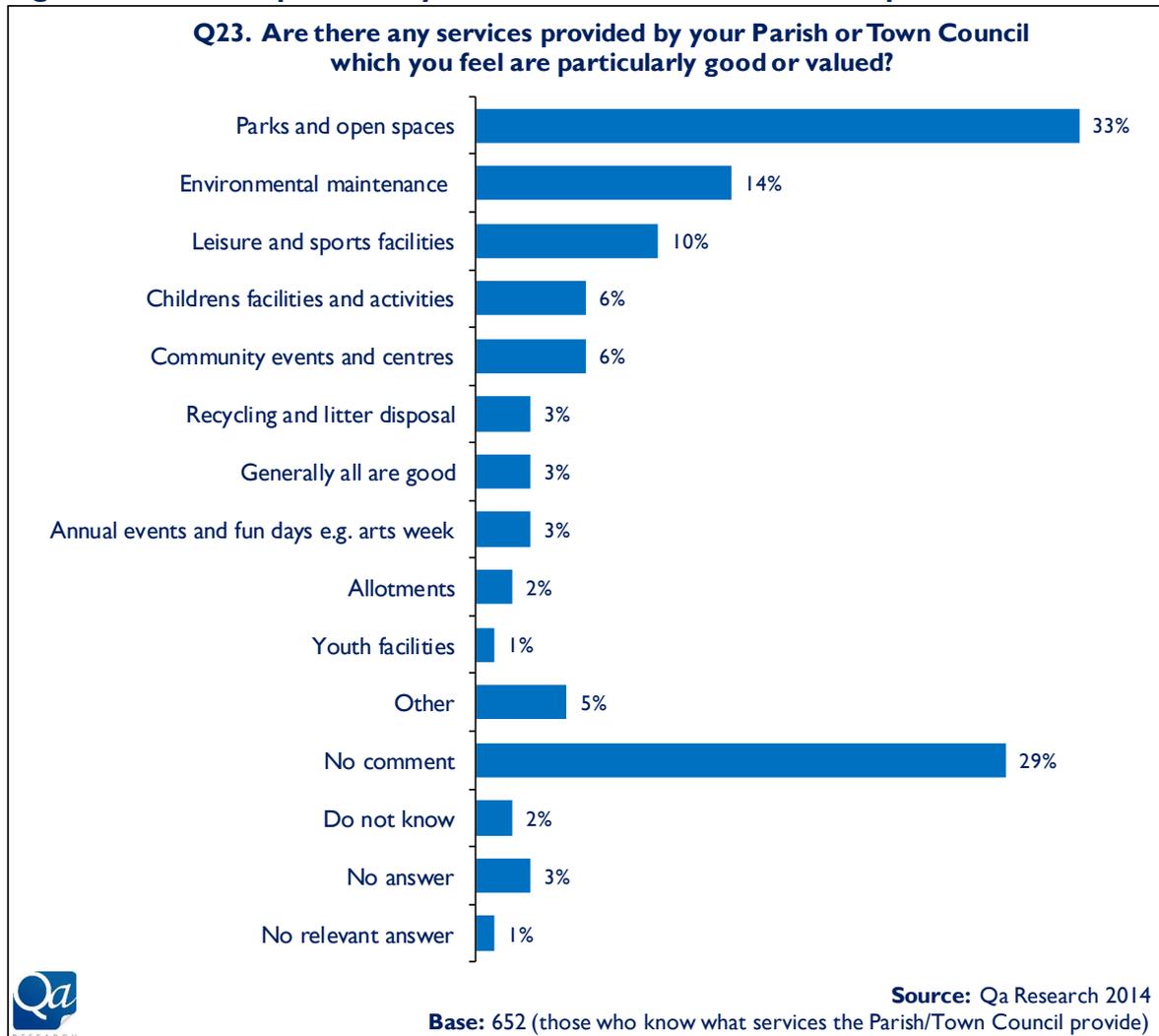
There were no significant differences between demographic sub-groups, suggesting that satisfaction with local services is universal. The chart below shows the satisfaction level by parish, with Sandhurst Town reporting the highest (89%) and Crowthorne the lowest (77%) satisfaction.

Figure 45. Satisfaction with the services provided by Parish/Town Council by Parish



Respondents who said they were aware of the services provided were then asked what services provided by their Parish or Town Council they felt were particularly good or of particular value. Answers were recorded verbatim and coded into categories shown below;

Figure 46. Services provided by Parish/Town Council that are of particular value



One third (33%) of respondents to this question said that '*parks and open spaces*' were a particularly good or valued service. Given that this was the second most used service across the borough, and the service with the highest satisfaction rating, is perhaps unsurprising that is listed as the most valued service here.

Respondents from Sandhurst Town were particularly happy with or valued '*parks and open spaces*'; two fifths (42%) gave this answer, significantly more than those from the parishes of Bracknell Town (32%), Crowthorne (16%, the lowest proportion), and Warfield (2%).

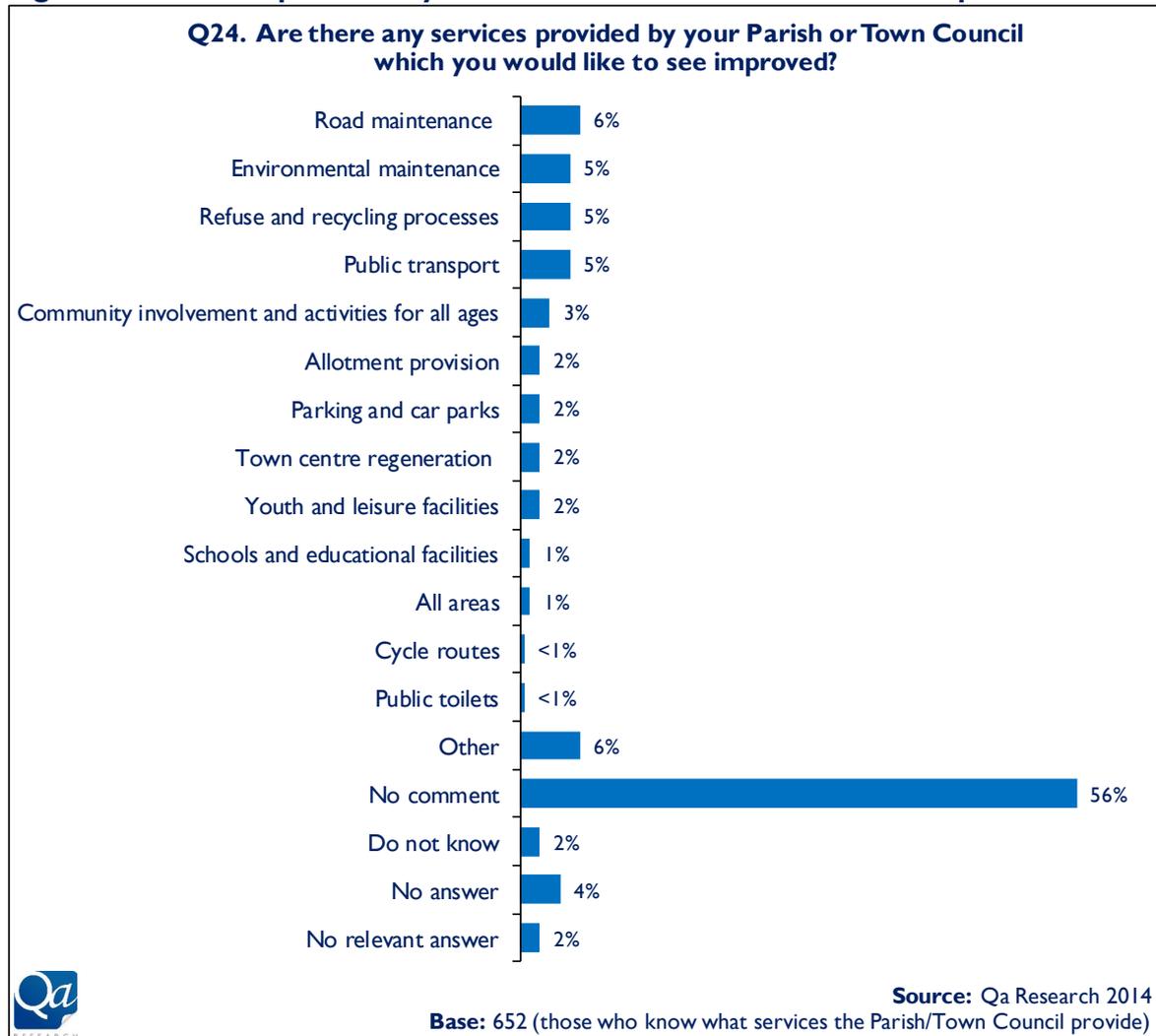
A small number of respondents listed services that were provided by the Borough Council and not by their town or parish council, suggesting some degree of confusion between these two organisations. These have been excluded in the chart above.

Demographic differences

Respondents aged 16-44 were significantly more likely to say 'parks and open spaces' (16-24: 44%, 25-34: 46%, 35-44: 44%) than those aged over 55 (55-64: 26%, 65+ 17%). BME respondents were also more likely to say this (50%, base: 88) than White British respondents (30%).

These respondents were then asked if there were any services provided by their Parish or Town Council that they would like to see improved. Again, answers were recorded verbatim and coded into categories shown below;

Figure 47. Services provided by Parish/Town Council that could be improved



Half (55%) of respondents at this question did not name any Parish or Town Council services that they felt needed to be improved; this, along with the wide variety of different suggestions made by small proportions of the sample, suggests that there is no single area that is particularly perceived as being in need of improvement.

Respondents from Sandhurst Town were significantly more likely to say 'no comment' (67%) than those from the parishes of Binfield (50%), Bracknell Town (51%), and Winkfield (47%).

5.7.3 Residents' interest in contributing to a Neighbourhood Plan

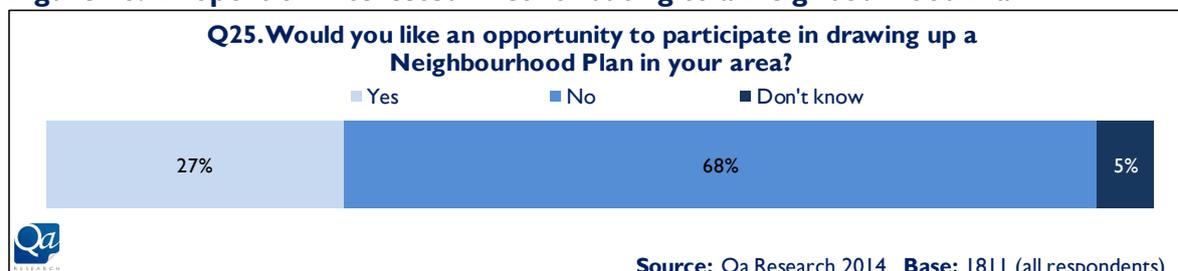
This penultimate subsection of the report examines residents' interest in contributing to a Neighbourhood Plan and if so, what they felt they could offer. These questions were not asked in 2012 and therefore there is no comparative data.

In order to ensure respondents understood a consistent definition of what a Neighbourhood Plan was, the following prefacing statement was read out to them;

"Neighbourhood planning gives local people the opportunity to draw up a planning document about their local area, called a Neighbourhood Plan. This plan establishes general planning policies for the development of land in a neighbourhood, including where new homes and offices should be built and what they should look like. It will form part of the overall development plan for the area and can be considered when local planning applications are being assessed"

Respondents were then asked if they would like the opportunity to participate in drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan in their area. Results are shown in the chart below;

Figure 48. Proportion interested in contributing to a Neighbourhood Plan



Only a minority of respondents (27%) indicated that they would be interested in the opportunity to participate in drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan in their area. This does still represent one-in-four respondents however.

Perhaps surprisingly, there was no significant difference in the level of interest between those who agreed that they could influence decisions affecting their local area (26%) and those who *disagreed* (30%). Equally surprising is that those who were satisfied with their local area as a place to live were significantly more likely to be interested in the Plan (27%) than those who were dissatisfied (17); apparently dissatisfaction with the local area does not translate in to a desire to improve it though the means of a Neighbourhood Plan. It could be that those that are satisfied with their local area feel more affinity with it and are therefore more motivated to try to improve it or at least to take an active part in how it develops over time. Respondents who were dissatisfied with the way the Council runs things were significantly more likely to express interest in the Neighbourhood Plan (33%) than those who were satisfied (25%). This may reflect a desire to take more control over their area.

Demographic differences

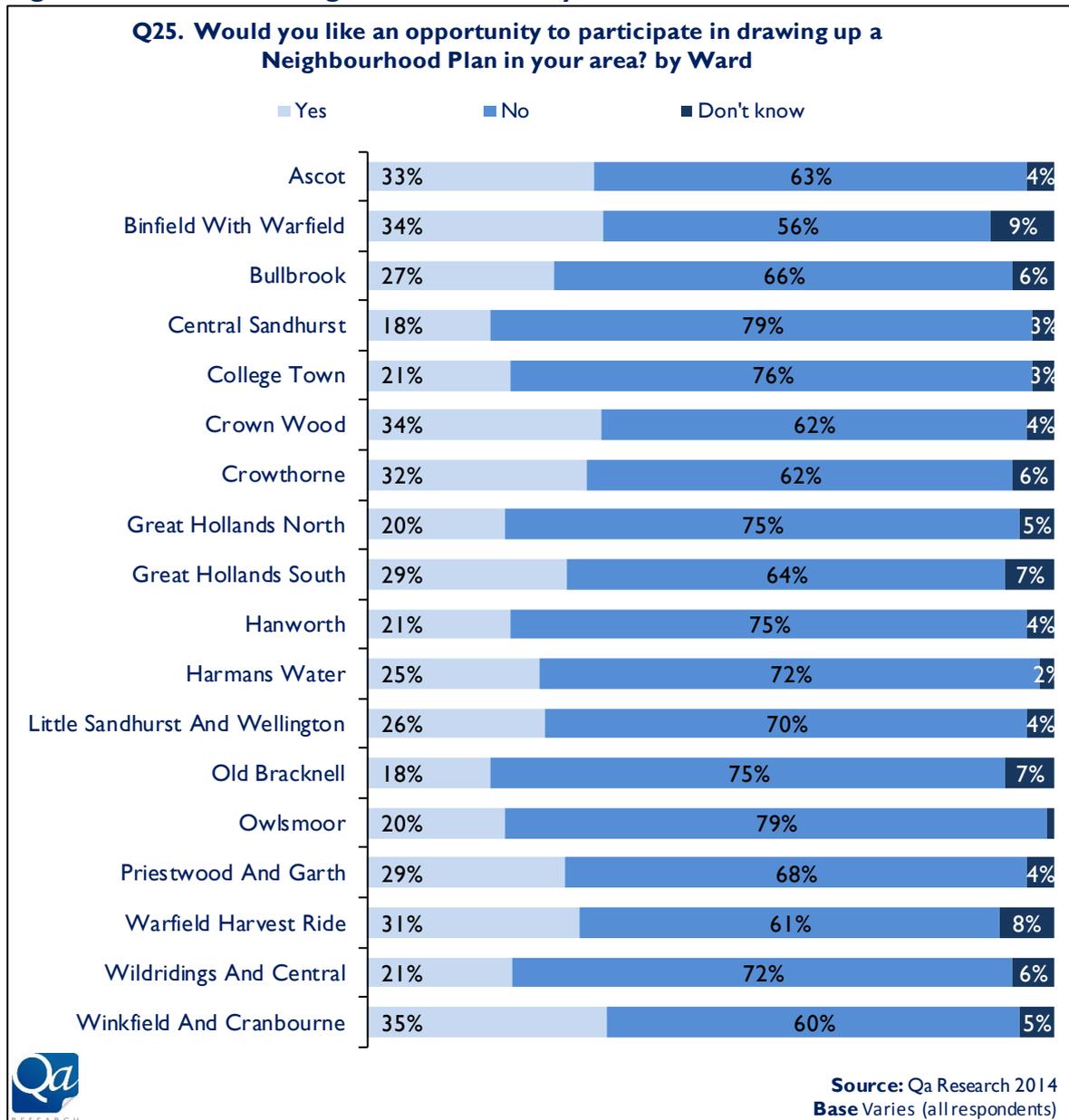
Male respondents were significantly more likely to indicate that they would be interested in the opportunity to participate in drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan in their area (30%) than female respondents (24%).

Interest in being involved in a Neighbourhood Plan was highest amongst those aged 35-64 (35-44: 31%, 45-54: 31%, 55-64: 31%), significantly more so than those aged 16-24 (15%, the lowest interest) and 65 and over (22%).

White British respondents were more likely to say 'no' (69%) than BME respondents (62%, who in turn were more likely to say 'don't know' (14% vs. 4%).

In addition, there were differences in the proportion indicating that they that they would be interested in the opportunity to participate in drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan by ward. These are shown in the chart below;

Figure 49. Interest in Neighbourhood Plan by ward

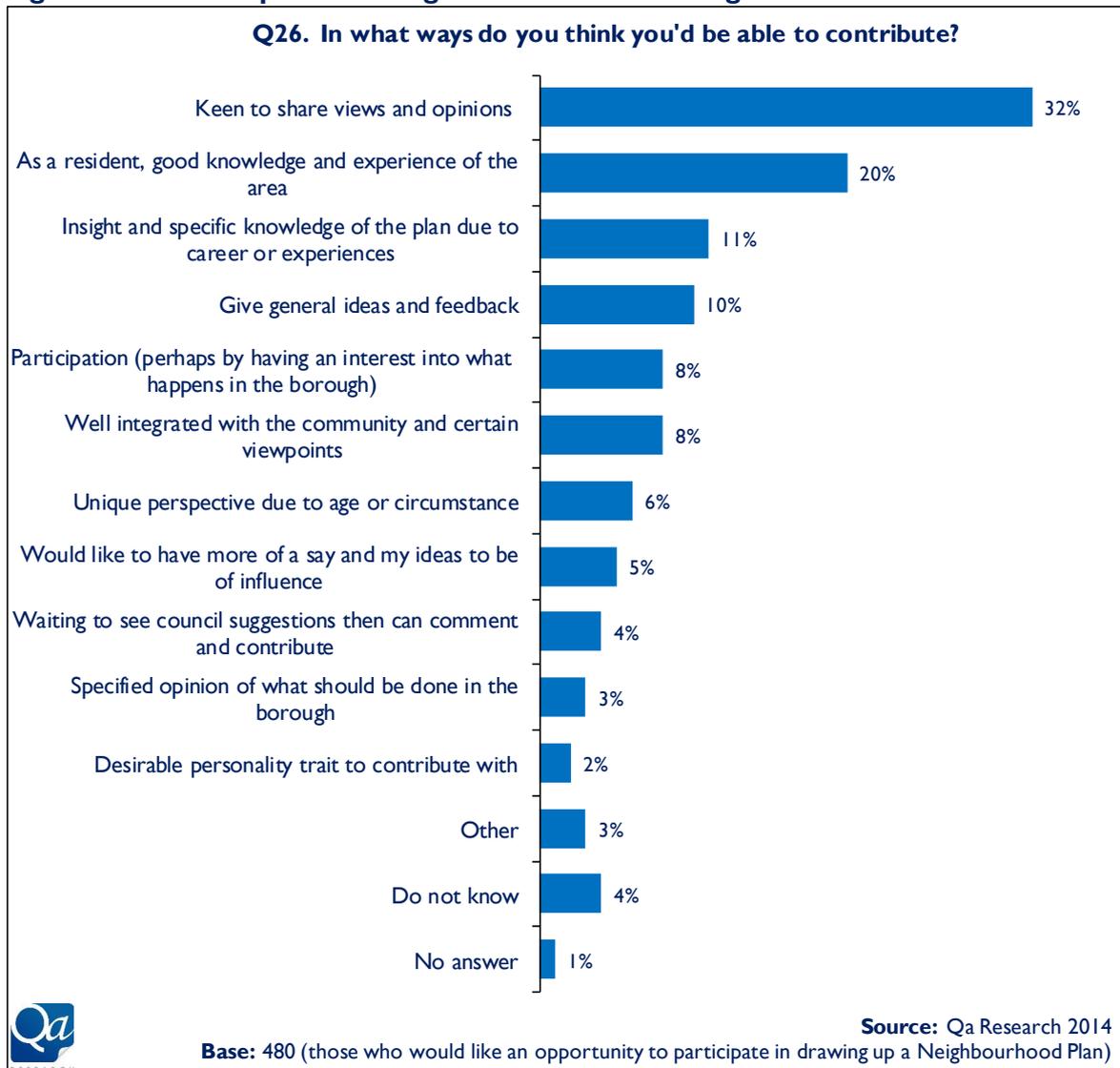


Respondents from Winkfield and Cranbourne (35%), Binfield with Warfield (34%), Crown Wood (34%) and Ascot (33%) had the highest level of interest in participating in drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan.

The wards where interest was lowest were Central Sandhurst (18%) and Old Bracknell (18%).

Those respondents who had indicated that they would be interested in participating in drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan were then asked in what ways they thought they would be able to contribute to the Plan. Answers were recorded verbatim, were coded into thematic categories prior to analysis, and are shown below;

Figure 50. How respondents might contribute to a Neighbourhood Plan



A third (32%) of respondents' felt that they could contribute to a Neighbourhood plan with 'keenness to share views and opinions', and this was the most common means of contributing. This perhaps indicates a willingness to contribute rather than an indication of what attributes they might bring to a Plan however.

Where answers related more to what respondents would bring to a Neighbourhood Plan this was generally about offering knowledge or experience, either 'of the area' (20%) or 'insight and specific knowledge from their career' (11%).

6. Conclusions

Conclusion 1: The change in methodology has provided a more representative sample and findings that are more reflective of the views of the borough.

The change from a postal survey, whereby respondents are entirely self-selecting, to a telephone survey designed to ensure a sample that better reflects the views of all demographic groups in the borough has been achieved. This change has in some instances led to year-on-year differences which reflect the fact that younger, male and BME residents were under-represented in the 2012 research. The 2014 findings are, therefore, a more accurate reflection of the views of the population of the borough as a whole. Generally, changes recorded in key measures between 2012 and 2014 are positive.

Conclusion 2: Residents continue to feel that Bracknell Forest is a good place to live and is getting better.

The majority of respondents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live, as was the case in 2012. Although there was some variation in the level of satisfaction amongst demographic subgroups and wards, this was minor and it is clear that there is an overall positivity to living in Bracknell Forest. Access to nature and green spaces were once again cited as the most valued features of living in Bracknell Forest and usage levels and satisfaction levels for parks and open spaces in particular remain comparatively high.

Respondents also agreed that there was strong community cohesion in their local area, and the proportion agreeing that people from different backgrounds get on well together where they live has increased significantly since 2012. In addition, there remains a low level of perception that there was a problem with the way people in the respondents' local area treated each other with respect and consideration, although there has been no change in this since 2012.

Agreement that people from different backgrounds get on well together and that there was not a problem with the way people treated each other were positively correlated with satisfaction with the local area, and these metrics are clearly linked. Consequently, where residents do not feel there is community cohesion this will impact on how positively they view their local area.

Despite satisfaction with the local area remaining high, many still feel that are unable to influence decisions that affect it. Only two fifths of respondents felt that they could influence decisions affecting their local area and, while this is an increase over the proportion in 2012, this leaves one-in-two respondents feeling that they cannot influence those decisions. Despite this, however, interest in being involved in a formal Neighbourhood Plan was low, suggesting that residents may not want the level of involvement that helping to shape a Neighbourhood Plan would require.

Conclusion 3: Around two-thirds expressed satisfaction with Bracknell Forest Council and the majority consider it provides value for money, with improvement in both measures recorded since 2012.

Almost two thirds of respondents were at least fairly satisfied with the way that Bracknell Forest Council runs things, and this had increased since 2012. Respondents were more likely to be only fairly satisfied than very satisfied, however, and one-in-ten were dissatisfied with the Council. There was little variation in the level of satisfaction by demographic measures, although those aged 65 and over reported higher levels of satisfaction.

A slightly lower proportion felt that the Council offers value for money; just under two thirds agreed that the Council did, although more of those tended to simply agree rather than strongly agree. Again, this represents a significant increase from 2012. Satisfaction was strongly linked to

the belief that the Council offered good value for money, as nearly nine-in-ten who agreed that the Council offered good value for money were satisfied with the way they run things, so demonstrating value is crucial in driving up satisfaction levels.

Ensuring that residents feel informed about the services and benefits the Council provides may also help to drive satisfaction levels up, as those who did feel informed were significantly more likely than those that didn't to express satisfaction with the Council.

Conclusion 4: The services provided or supported by Bracknell Forest Council generate high levels of satisfaction overall, although there is the potential to improve some areas of service.

Respondents who felt able or willing to give an opinion were more satisfied than dissatisfied with services provided or supported by Bracknell Forest Council, and satisfaction levels have increased significantly since 2012. The level of satisfaction is generally high, although there is room for improvement in some areas. Crucially, however, the most frequently used services are also those that report the highest levels of satisfaction.

Park & open spaces, waste & recycling services, leisure, sports & arts facilities, libraries and schools all have high levels of satisfaction amongst those who use them; however, planning, local bus services, housing advice, and in particular road maintenance were all areas that reported relatively high degrees of dissatisfaction and represent services that could be improved. In addition, some services attracted a large proportion of respondents who are neutral about them (who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) and therefore minor improvements to these services could, potentially, shift respondents to being satisfied with them.

Conclusion 5: The majority of residents continue to feel they are at least fairly well informed about Council services, although there has been no improvement since 2012.

Although two thirds of respondents felt they were at least fairly well informed about the services and benefits that the Council provides, there has been little overall change since 2012. There is certainly scope to improve this, especially given the previously described link between feeling informed and satisfaction with the Council.

The most common methods of receiving information from the Council continue to be leaflets or partnership publications by post, the Town and Country newsletter, and local newspapers or radio; however, the proportion using all these has decreased significantly since 2012. In contrast, the proportion using and receiving information online and via social media has increased, and although preference for online communication continues to outstrip usage (suggesting improvements could be made) this gap has narrowed since 2012. In part, these differences reflect the higher proportion of younger respondents in 2014.

Conclusion 6: Contact with Parish or Town Councils continues to be minimal and has actually fallen since 2012.

Only one fifth of respondents had contacted their Parish or Town Council in the past 12 months; this was a significant decrease since 2012, and although this may be partly driven by a more representative dataset there remains a fall in the level of contact across all age groups. Reasons for making contact were varied, and although environmental maintenance and planning were the most common prompts there was no single issue that dominated.

Where enquiries were made, one third of these were seen as not being adequately dealt with. This was generally due to the perception that the Council did not act to deal with the cause of the enquiry (although it was sometimes acknowledged that doing so was outside their power).

Conclusion 7: Although those who were aware of the services provided by Parish and Town Councils were satisfied with them, awareness remains low and is possibly decreasing.

The majority of respondents who were aware of the services that were provided by their Parish or Town Council were satisfied with them. This was linked to satisfaction with the local area as a place to live, and was reasonably consistent across the various parishes of Bracknell Forest (although satisfaction was particularly high in Sandhurst Town).

It is important to note that only one third of all respondents indicated that they were aware of what these services *actually were*. This represents a significant decrease since 2012, although this is likely to be partially driven the more representative sample of 2014.

Parks & open spaces were perceived as the most valued service provided by Parish and Town Councils, which is in line with them being seen as one of the key features of Bracknell Forest. When prompted for what services provided by Parish or Town Councils should be improved there was no single answer that emerged dominant, and in fact half of those asked did not give any suggestions.

7. Appendix

Annex 1: Bracknell Forest Residents Survey 2014

This survey has been designed to transfer smoothly to QA's CATI system, and looks slightly different to a conventional survey. The questions themselves are the same, but are simply presented differently. The explanation below should help, but please do contact your contact at QA if you are unsure.

All questions, (including prompts for interviewers/respondents e.g. 'Tick all that apply') are formatted with the 'Question' style in blue.

All responses are listed and formatted using the 'Response' style in red.

Questions followed by a blank line are an open-ended or numeric question.

Instructions (i.e. routing instructions) are formatted using the 'Instruction' style in italic. Rating questions are simply listed with the scale listed first followed by the responses and formatted using the 'Response' style.

Good morning/ afternoon/evening my name is ____ and I am calling from Qa Research on behalf of your Bracknell Forest Council, who have asked us to carry out a survey to help them understand the views of Bracknell Forest residents.

The survey will take around 10 to 12 minutes and is designed to help Bracknell Forest Council and its partners understand the attitudes of local residents towards their local area and residents' priorities for public services. All your answers will be anonymous and confidential.

Would now be a good time for you to take part in the survey?

Yes – Continue

No – Book appointment

Just to reassure you this interview will be carried out according to the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct. Your answers will be treated in confidence (in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998) and the findings of this survey will be reported anonymously. If there are any questions that you do not wish to answer, then please let me know. The call may be recorded for quality purposes.

SCREENERS

The first few questions are about you, so we can ensure that we speak to a good cross-section of local residents.

S1. Firstly, could I ask how old you are?

WRITE IN

S2. Gender

Male

Female

S3: May I confirm that your postcode is (check against database to ensure correct Ward for quotas)

S4. How would you describe your ethnic background?

DO NOT READ OUT - PROBE IF REQUIRED

SINGLECODE

Asian or Asian British

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Filipino

Indian

Nepali

Pakistani

Any other Asian background

Black or Black British

African

Caribbean

Any other Black background

Mixed

White & Asian

White & Black African

White & Black Caribbean

Any other Mixed background

White

English/British/Northern Irish/Scottish /Welsh

Gypsy/Irish Traveller

Irish

Showpeople/Circus

Any other White background

Arab/Other Ethnic Group

Arab

Other ethnic group

Prefer not to say

This section asks for your views on what it's like in your local area. Please consider your 'local area' to be the area within 15-20 minutes walking distance from your home.

Q1. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live? READ OUT

Singlecode

Very satisfied
Fairly satisfied
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Fairly dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know

Q2. Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area? READ OUT

Singlecode

Definitely agree
Tend to agree
Tend to disagree
Definitely disagree
Don't know

Q3 To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together? By getting on well together, we mean living alongside each other with respect. READ OUT

Singlecode

Definitely agree
Tend to agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Tend to disagree
Definitely disagree
Too few people in the area
All the same ethnic background
Don't know

Q4. In your local area, how much of a problem do you think there is with people not treating each other with respect and consideration? READ OUT

Singlecode

- A very big problem
- A fairly big problem
- Not a very big problem
- Not a problem at all
- Don't know

Section 2: Your Council

Q5. What three things do you like best about living in the Borough? DO NOT READ OUT – PROBE TO CODES BELOW

Multicode up to three

- Access to nature
- Activities for teenagers
- Affordable decent housing
- Community activities
- Cultural facilities (e.g. cinema, South Hill Park)
- Education provision
- Care for older people
- Facilities for young children
- Health services
- The level of crime
- Parks and open spaces
- Public Transport
- Sports and leisure facilities
- Cleanliness of the environment
- Employment opportunities
- Other (write in)
- Don't know

Your local area receives services from Bracknell Forest Council who are responsible for a range of functions and activities such as refuse collection, street cleaning, planning, schools, social care services and road maintenance.

Q6. On average, how often would you say that you or members of your immediate family used the following services that are provided by the Council? READ OUT

Singlecode

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

Once every few months

About once a year

Less frequently

Never

Don't know

LOOP – RANDOMISE ORDER OF ASKING

Recycling facilities

Longshot Lane Household waste recycling centre

Local bus services

Sport/leisure facilities

Libraries

Parks and open spaces

Schools

Childcare services

South Hill Park arts facility

Youth services

Community centres

Social care services

Planning

Housing Advice

Benefit Services

Q7. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with each of the following services provided or supported by Bracknell Forest Council? READ OUT

Singlecode

Very satisfied
Fairly satisfied
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Fairly dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know

LOOP – RANDOMISE ORDER OF ASKING

Planning
Refuse collection
Kerbside recycling
Longshot Lane Household waste recycling centre
Local transport information
Local bus services
Sport/leisure facilities
Libraries
Parks and open spaces
Schools
Childcare services
South Hill Park arts facility
Youth services
Community centres
Social care services
Road maintenance
The standard of maintenance of public land, such as grass cutting, litter and graffiti
Housing Advice
Benefit Services

In considering the next question, please think about the range of services Bracknell Forest Council provides to the community as a whole, as well as the services your household uses. It does not matter if you do not know all of the services Bracknell Forest Council provides to the community. We would like your general opinion.

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Bracknell Forest Council provides value for money? READ OUT

Singlecode

Strongly agree
Tend to agree
Neither agree or disagree
Tend to disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know

Q9. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Bracknell Forest Council runs things? READ OUT

Singlecode

Very satisfied
Fairly satisfied
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Fairly dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know

Q10. What, if anything, do you think the Council could do differently which would have a positive impact within Bracknell Forest?

Codes open

Section 3: Receiving information and being kept informed

Q11. Overall, how well informed do you think Bracknell Forest Council keeps residents about the services and benefits it provides? By benefits, we mean any positive impacts it has on the local area. READ OUT

Singlecode

Very well informed
Fairly well informed
Not very well informed
Not well informed at all
Don't know

Q12a. How do you currently receive information about the services provided by the Council and its partners? READ OUT

Multicode

Online
Social Media e.g. Facebook, Twitter
Leaflets / Partnership publications by post
Local Newspapers / Radio
At Community Centres / Offices
Face to face
Town and Country (the Council Newsletter)
Other (write in)
Don't know

**Q12b. Which would be your top two preferred methods to receive information about services provided by the Council and its partners?
READ OUT**

Multicode up to two

Online

Social Media e.g. Facebook, Twitter

Leaflets / Partnership publications by post

Local Newspapers / Radio

At Community Centres / Offices

Face to face

Town and Country (the Council Newsletter)

Other (write in)

Don't know

Q13. Are there any other comments you would like to make relating to the issues covered in this survey, or about the Council or local services more generally?

Codes open

Section 4: Helping Out

We are interested to know about the unpaid help people give.

Q16a. Have you given unpaid help to any groups, clubs or organisations over the last 12 months?

Please exclude giving money and anything that was a requirement of your job. Please only include work that is unpaid and not for your family. **READ OUT**

Singlecode

Yes

No

Give unpaid help as an individual only and not through groups, clubs or organisations

Don't know

ASK Q16b IF 'Yes' AT Q16a.

Q16b. Overall, about how often over the last 12 months have you given unpaid help to any groups, clubs or organisations? READ OUT

Singlecode

At least once a week

Less than once a week but at least once a month

Less often

Don't know

Section 5: Parish and Town Council

Q17. Have you contacted your Parish or Town Council during the past year?

Singlecode

Yes

No

Don't know what Parish or Town Council is

Don't know

ASK Q18-20 IF 'Yes' AT Q17. OTHERS GOTO Q21

Q18. Why did you contact them?

CODES OPEN

Q19. Was the enquiry dealt with adequately?

Singlecode

Yes

No

Don't know

ASK Q20 IF 'No' AT Q19. OTHERS GOTO Q21

Q20. Why was that?

CODES OPEN

ASK ALL

Q21. Please listen to the following description; READ OUT

Parish and Town Councils provide some local facilities and services and each tailors its services and spending to its community. The services provided vary from area to area, but often include looking after parks and play areas and providing sports pitches, open spaces, play equipment and allotments. Some also run community halls and services for young people and all give grants to help local groups.

Do you know what services your Parish or Town Council provides?

Singlecode

Yes

No

Don't know

ASK Q22 IF 'Yes' AT Q21. OTHERS GOTO Q25

Q22. How satisfied are you with the services provided by your Parish or Town Council? READ OUT

Singlecode

Very satisfied

Fairly satisfied

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Fairly dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

Don't know

Q23. Are there any services provided by your Parish or Town Council which you feel are particularly good or valued?

CODES OPEN

Q24. Are there any services provided by your Parish or Town Council which you would like to see improved?

CODES OPEN

ASK ALL

Q25. Please listen to the following description;

Neighbourhood planning gives local people the opportunity to draw up a planning document about their local area, called a

Neighbourhood Plan. This plan establishes general planning policies for the development of land in a neighbourhood, including where new homes and offices should be built and what they should look like. It will form part of the overall development plan for the area and can be considered when local planning applications are being assessed.

Would you like an opportunity to participate in drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan in your area?

ASK Q26 IF 'Yes' AT Q25. OTHERS GOTO Q27

Q26. In what ways do you think you'd be able to contribute?

CODES OPEN

Section 6: About You

I'd now like to ask you a few questions about yourself. These questions help us to see if there are any differences between the views of different residents and help the Council to tailor and improve their service accordingly. Please be assured that all information will be kept completely confidential.

Q27 Do you have access to Broadband internet connection at home?

READ OUT

Singlecode

Yes

No

Don't know

Q28. How would you describe your religion/ belief? READ OUT

Singlecode

None

Christian (all Christian denominations)

Buddhist

Hindu

Muslim

Sikh

Jewish

Other (write in)

Q29. How would you describe your sexual orientation? READ OUT

Singlecode

Heterosexual/ straight

Gay man

Lesbian/ gay women

Bisexual

Prefer not to say

Q30. Do you have any children aged 18 or under?

Singlecode

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

ASK Q31 IF 'Yes' AT Q30.

Q31. If you have children what age are they? READ OUT

Multicode

0 - 3

4 - 7

8 - 11

12 - 15

16 - 18

Prefer not to say

Thank and close

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Performance Indicator Table

Ind Ref	Short Description	Previous Figure 2012/13	Current Figure 2014/15	Current Target	Current Status	Trend
Performance indicators – these are measures (previous national indicators or best value indicators) where the Council has set targets						
NI001	Percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area (Biennially (every two years))	87%	94%	88.0%		
NI004	Percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality (Biennially (every two years))	30%	42%	32.0%		
NI006	Participation in regular volunteering (Biennially (every two years))	28%	20%	31.0%		
NI023	People in the area not treating one another with respect and consideration is a problem (Biennially (every two years))	14%	12%	13.0%		
Responses to other questions – these are measures where the Council has not set targets preferring to monitor trends over time						
	Percentage of people who are satisfied with their local area as a place to live	85%	87%	N/A	-	
	Overall satisfaction with the way the Council runs things	60%	64%	N/A	-	
	Percentage that strongly agree or tend to agree that the Council provides value for money	52%	59%	N/A	-	
	Percentage that think the Council keeps residents informed very well or fairly well	64%	64%	N/A	-	
Satisfaction with specific Council services – with comparative data where available						
	Parks and open spaces	86%	86%	N/A	-	
	Longshot Lane recycling centre (defined as 'local tips / household waste recycling centres' in 2012)	82%	73%	N/A	-	
	Refuse collection (defined as 'refuse collection / recycling' in 2012)	78%	73%	N/A	-	
	Kerbside recycling (referred to as 'doorstep recycling' in 2012)	68%	74%	N/A	-	
	Standard of maintenance of public land e.g. grass cutting, litter, graffiti (defined as 'Keeping land clear of litter/refuse' in 2012)	56%	71%	N/A	-	
	Libraries	56% (25% don't know)	53% (35% don't know)	N/A	-	
	Sport/Leisure facilities	52% (24% don't know)	64% (22% don't know)	N/A	-	
	Road maintenance	36%	40%	N/A	-	
	South Hill Park Arts facility (referred to as 'Arts facilities' in 2012)	33% (45% don't know)	59% (30% don't know)	N/A	-	
	Local bus services	32% (33% don't know)	32% (43% don't know)	N/A	-	

	Local transport information	29% (31% don't know)	37% (36% don't know)	N/A	-	
	Schools	27% (56% don't know)	44% (45% don't know)	N/A	-	
	Community centres	24% (52% don't know)	29% (57% don't know)	N/A	-	
	Planning	15% (43% don't know)	15% (67% don't know)	N/A	-	
	Social care services	11% (69% don't know)	12% (77% don't know)	N/A	-	
	Childcare services	7% (76% don't know)	10% (82% don't know)	N/A	-	
	Youth Services	5% (78% don't know)	11% (78% don't know)	N/A	-	
	Benefit Services	-	12% (77% don't know)	N/A	-	-

Traffic Lights		Performance Trend	
Compares current performance to target		Identifies direction of travel compared to previous survey results	
On, above or within 2.5% of target		Performance has improved	
Between 2.5% and 7.5% of target		Performance Sustained	
More than 7.5% from target		Performance has declined	

Communications Plan for Residents' Survey 2014 Results – January 2015

Aim: To publicise residents' survey results.

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Date	Action	Target audience	Further information	By whom
January 2015	Information	Members	Information email to All Members with their ward data	Head of Community Engagement and Equalities
January 2015	Agenda item	Members	Discussion at PRG on 05.01.15 with agenda published pre Christmas.	Head of Community Engagement and Equalities
January 2015	Information	Parish and Town Councils	Information email to P&TC sharing results report.	Head of Community Engagement and Equalities
January 2015	Information	Residents	Press release of highlights of results to local media. Social media mentions and summary of the results on the website.	Deputy Head of Communications and Marketing
January 2015	Information	Residents	Holding statements to offer explanations of results	Deputy Head of Communications and Marketing
January 2015	Agenda item	Members	Decision at Executive on 27.01.15.	Head of Community Engagement and Equalities
January 2015	Agenda item	Members	Discussion at Overview & Scrutiny Commission on 29.01.15.	Head of Community Engagement and Equalities
January 2015	Information	Partner organisations	Information email to BFP board and themed partnerships	Head of Community Engagement and Equalities
February 2015	Agenda item	Officers	Attend Departmental Management Team meetings	Head of Community Engagement and Equalities
February 2015	Information	BFC employees	Article in Forest Views to highlight change in methodology and satisfaction rates with service delivery.	Deputy Head of Communications and Marketing
February 2015	Information	Residents	Social Media Mentions: Key facts and figures to be posted on facebook and tweeted at regular intervals: "Did you know"	Deputy Head of Communications and Marketing

Date	Action	Target audience	Further information	By whom
February 2015	Information	BFC employees and partners	Upload report results to Stat Share.	Joint Commissioning Officer, Adult Social Care, Health and Housing
March 2015	Information	Residents	Article in Town & Country to highlight change in methodology and satisfaction rates with service delivery.	Deputy Head of Communications and Marketing
March 2015	Agenda item	Partner organisations	Discussion at Community Safety Partnership on 09.03.15	Head of Community Engagement and Equalities
March 2015	Agenda item	Partner organisations	Discussion at Community Cohesion and Engagement Partnership on 12.03.15.	Head of Community Engagement and Equalities
March 2015	Agenda item	Officers	Discussion at Customer Contact Strategy Group on 16.03.15.	Head of Community Engagement and Equalities
March 2015	Agenda item	Members	Discussion at Environment, Culture and Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel on 17.03.15.	Head of Performance and Resources Environment, Culture and Communities
March 2015	Agenda item	Partner organisations	Discussion at Bracknell Forest Partnership on 19.03.15.	Head of Community Engagement and Equalities
March 2015	Agenda item	Parish and Town Council members and officers	Discussion at Parish and Town Council Liaison Group on 23.03.15.	Head of Community Engagement and Equalities
April / May 2015	Information	BFC Employees	Presentation as part of Chief Executive Roadshow to highlights results of the survey.	Chief Executive



CORPORATE PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORT

Q2 2014 - 15
July - September 2014

Chief Executive:
Timothy Wheadon

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Section 1: Chief Executive's Commentary

1 Introduction

1.1 This report sets out an overview of the Council's performance for the second quarter of 2014/15 (July - September 2014). The purpose is to provide the Executive with a high-level summary of key achievements, and to highlight areas where performance is not matching targets or expectations, along with any remedial action that is being taken. It complements the detailed Quarterly Service Reports (QSRs) produced by each Director, which were circulated to Members in November.

1.2 Overall, good progress has been made against the actions in the departmental service plans. At the end of the quarter, of the actions included in these service plans, progress showed

- 15 actions (5.7% of the total) are complete;
- 229 actions (87.4%) are on target;
- 17 actions (6.5%) either have not yet started or where they have been started there is a possibility that they may fall behind schedule;
- There are no actions which should have been started but have not yet begun, or which are behind schedule;
- 1 action (0.4%) is no longer applicable.

1.3 Section 2 of this report contains information on the key performance indicators across the Council. Again the picture is generally positive, showing that the current status for the Council's 75 indicators is:

- 45 (81.8%) green – i.e. on, above or within 5% of target;
- 3 (5.5%) amber – i.e. between 5% and 10% of target;
- 7 (12.7%) red – i.e. more than 10% from target.

In addition there are 11 indicators where it is not appropriate to set a target and 9 indicators where the data is currently not available largely due third party information not yet being released.

2 Overview of the 2nd quarter

2.1 Against the general background of effective performance a number of areas warrant a special mention. These include:

- Good progress was made throughout the quarter towards the town centre regeneration with the Council in particular playing a pivotal role in preparing the way for the agreement to lease between Fenwick and BRP that was subsequently exchanged in October.
- The percentage of the Borough's households participating in recycling reward scheme (L201) continues to increase steadily and this quarter stood at 23% of all households against a target of 18%.
- 100% of areas inspected for Street Cleanliness met EPA national standard and the contractual quality standard required.
- Total crime for the quarter was again lower than the expected target and also down on the same period in 2013/14 with 2,258 crimes during this quarter against 2,514 in quarter 2 of last year.

- Both the number of reported incidents of theft from a motor vehicle (CSP7.01) and of theft of a motor vehicle (CSP7.02) was down on the same quarter last year. There were just 15 incidents of theft of a motor vehicle in quarter 2, down from 19 in quarter 1.
- The percentage of the current year's Business Rates collected in year was 57.1% against a target of 55.7%. This is up from 48.9% at this stage in 2013/14.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, 65% (60% nationally in 2013) achieved a good level of development; with an average total point score of 35.4 (33 nationally in 2013).
- 43% of Pupil Premium pupils attained or exceeded expected levels in all Early Learning Goals, up from 32.7% in 2013 and closing the gap by 4.2%. Pupils were screened at the end of Year 1 for Phonics and 75% attained the required level, a significant improvement on 69% in Bracknell Forest and 68% nationally in 2013.

2.2 Inevitably in a large and diverse organisation there are a small number of areas where performance did not match targets. The most noteworthy are highlighted below.

- Support for carers is a key element in support for vulnerable people. During quarter 2, of those people receiving a community based service, only 12.6% of carers received a needs assessment or review and a specific carer's service, or advice and information (NI 135). The target for the end of the year is 37% and there are no concerns about it being reached at this stage.
- Despite the housing service preventing 9% more households becoming homeless in than the previous year there has been an overall increase in the number of households that the council has accepted a homeless duty towards compared to the previous year. This has led to that the number of household nights spent in B&B across the quarter (NI178) has exceeded the target. The Council will continue to purchase temporary to permanent properties in 2014/15 to assist with managing this pressure.
- Child protection numbers continue to be high. At the end of August the numbers of children with child protection plans reached 141 although this reduced to 123 at the end of September. During October it is expected that child protection plans will conclude for a number of young children as applications to the courts are made to enable them to come into the Looked After Children's system.
- The percentage of calls answered by the Customer Services Contact Centre within 20 seconds (L194) is still below target despite having improved over the last quarter. The team continue to face the challenge of 2 staff on maternity leave but have now filled vacant posts and have 2 staff in training.
- A new computerised library management system project has completed phase 1 of the installation process. The figures for the number of web enabled transactions in libraries (L017) do not currently include all of the range of e-enabled transactions that customers carry out. As the implementation project continues this will be rectified and these figures will be brought up to date.
- Whilst use of the on line booking system by leisure users is still very high (14,409 bookings in first six months of the year) it is falling short of the new ambitious target figure set for this year for web enabled transactions (L018).

- The quarter saw the numbers of planning applications submitted and appeals lodged continuing to rise, putting the development management service under real strain. Members will be aware that these pressures manifested themselves in a number of problems relating to obtaining and implementing planning permissions at important school projects over the summer. There have since been detailed discussions involving senior officers from both Departments and from the Corporate centre to improve the process in future. In addition extra resources will be added to the service area to address the increase in demand. It is hoped that an additional 3 Planning Officers will be in post by the end of Q3, although the current shortage of experienced planning officers in the labour market may impacted on this.
- Despite the overall reduction in crime, the number of reported burglary dwellings (CSP1.01) rose this quarter. This rise has been largely attributed to three perpetrators who have now been charged with a number of these offences. The number of burglaries remains low, however, compared with past performance and against the number within other Thames Valley areas.

2.3 Other issues not specifically included in the performance data but worthy of mention are:

- In July the market moved out from the ground floor of Winchester House and is now an outdoor market located in High Street East. With the market moving, it is now possible for Winchester House to be demolished and work is now underway.
- The Annual Report for Adult Social Care 2013/14 received approval in quarter 2. The Department produced three short video podcasts highlighting key areas of work - personalisation, dementia friendly communities and prevention and early intervention.
- The Air Quality Action Plan and the Annual Air Quality Monitoring report have both received complimentary and supporting comments from DEFRA.
- The 2014 Summer of Fun programme, organised by Bracknell Forest Council's Childcare and Play team achieved record attendance figures with over 21,000 people accessing the 9 free events held in parks across the borough. 98% of those consulted about the Summer of Fun events said that they brought families closer together in the community where they live.
- The redevelopment of Great Hollands Community Centre and Library has been completed this quarter, a new IT suite is available for community use in the library and an additional newly refurbished room is available for hire in the centre. The Library is also working with volunteers to see if it can extend its opening hours.
- The new queuing system at Time Square is operational with customers now having the opportunity to self-serve a ticket from a touch screen kiosk in main reception. Customers can also obtain a ticket at the main reception if required, however, emphasis is on promoting self-service and speeding up this initial part of the customers visit.
- The Children's Social Worker Microsite is now posted on-line and constitutes a significant move forward in providing an innovative platform for recruitment activity in this key area. A very close watch is being kept on the recruitment situation following the agreement of specific measures earlier in the year. Initial indications are, however encouraging, although it will be necessary to continually monitor the impact of neighbouring

Councils' own recruitment initiatives. West Berkshire, for example, have introduced a £1.0m retention incentive scheme in recent months.

- The Business and Enterprise Service (BES) work plan (endorsed by the Executive at the end of September) is a significant development and provides the funding for the key economic development projects. The projects coming on stream are the business contact programme, the local business partnership scheme, Elevate Bracknell Forest, major infrastructure survey and an inward investment strategy.
- The Berkshire Emergency Planning Team was shortlisted for two of the Emergency Planning Society Annual Awards. Nominations were entered into the 'Resilience Team of the Year' and 'Most Innovative Product'.
- An analysis of the 72 council related Performance Indicators that make up the different national Outcome Frameworks was undertaken for the 16 member authorities of South East Strategic Leaders Group. Bracknell Forest was 3rd highest overall when comparing performance across the 16 SESL member Councils. In the borough Learning Disability and Carer services performed particularly well, with other top performing measures ranging from re-offending rates and road deaths through to pupil attendance and the level of activity undertaken by adults.

3 External inspections, audit and scrutiny

- 3.1 The results from the second round of sampling of food for nutritional content in Residential Homes have concluded that there has been a significant improvement in all but one home. All those initially tested, with the exception of one home, attended a day's training and this appears to have been a significant factor in the improvement. Officers will continue to work with management within the home where improvement was not achieved.
- 3.2 The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) regulates the powers of public bodies to carry out surveillance and investigation. During the quarter there was 1 RIPA undercover action authorised for 15 August but not actioned due to child volunteers not being available. One further application was authorised and actioned for communications data relating to subscriber details for a mobile phone which was used in transactions in connection with breaches of the Fraud Act 2006.
- 3.3 A stock and security review of the Registration Service was undertaken by the General Register Office in August. Areas of good practice were identified and the highest security rating was achieved.
- 3.4 The Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) work programme for 2014/15 is being delivered as planned. The Executive agreed all the recommendations by the O&S Working Group which reviewed the Provision of School Places. The Executive will be considering the report of the Working Groups on Cultural Services in quarter 3. The report of the Working Group on the Council's role in Regulated Adult Social Care Services is being finalised. The Working Group on Business Rates is expected to conclude its review in quarter 3, and the Working Group reviewing Substance Misuse by Children and Young People is making good progress. The responses to the Member Survey in quarter 2 gave an 84% net satisfaction rating with the support received from O&S officers, and feedback from senior officers on the quality and usefulness of O&S reviews continued to be very positive, at 90% satisfaction overall, to date.

4 Strategic Risks

- 4.1 The Strategic Risk Register is reviewed quarterly by the Strategic Risk Management Group (SMRG), twice a year by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and by Members at least once a year. During quarter 2 of 2014/15, the Register was reviewed by Governance and Audit Committee on the 14th July and by SMRG on 29th August. The key changes made this quarter were to
- increase the impact of the major projects and programmes risk due to the implementation of the Care Act and Health and Social Care Act;
 - reduce the likelihood of the information management and technology risk;
 - reduce the litigation and legislation risk.

5 Updates since the end Quarter 2

- 5.1 The annual Bracknell Forest Careers event took place on 9 October involving all six secondary schools in the borough and over 80 exhibitors.
- 5.2 The new street cleansing and grounds maintenance contracts with Continental Landscapes began on 1 October. Existing staff in the landscape service will be TUPE transferred to Continental.
- 5.3 The Self Care and Prevention programme is in place, with a number of high profile public engagement events to be held including Healthy Hearts on 11 October; evening learning about Diabetes on 12 November; Self-Care Week from the 17 to 23 November.
- 5.4 Anti-bullying week runs over the week of 17 - 23 November with a number of events being planned in schools. This coincides with the Self Care week organised by Adult Social Care, with schools being encouraged to participate in activities.
- 5.5 A Residents' Parking Permit Scheme in areas around Bracknell Town Centre was introduced on 20 October with a 1 month enforcement amnesty period.
- 5.6 The 2014 Residents' Survey began in September and ran for six weeks with 1,800 residents being asked what they think about the services provided by the Council. Telephone interviewers will ask a range of questions about services, what the Council does well and where further improvements could be made. The survey covers a range of subjects from how satisfied residents are with the borough's schools, libraries, parks, waste collections and social care to how residents like to find out about council services.
- 5.7 A Real Time Bus Passenger Information system is due to be rolled out during November.
- 5.8 During October the Council hosted two delegations from China, focusing on (Hunan Province and the city of Tianjin). These visits were a direct result of the Council's work to foster economic links with China.

6 Forward Look

- 6.1 Public Health will be launching a number of new programmes including a tailored, multi-session health improvement programme aimed at improving self-care for those with pre-diabetes; a programme aimed at smokers who are living with mental health conditions.

- 6.2 Community Safety's approach to anti-social behaviour will be reviewed following the implementation of the Police and Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2014 in October 2014.
- 6.3 Construction of further school capacity projects is expected to start on site this term at Garth Hill College and The Brakenhale School. These projects will together deliver in excess of 600 new school places which are all planned to be completed for the start of the September 2015 academic year.
- 6.4 Work will begin in December to prepare applications for open spaces that have retained their Green Flag Award status in 2014. These include Pope's Meadow, Shepherd Meadows & Sandhurst Memorial Park, Lily Hill Park and South Hill Park.
- 6.5 Utilities and Highways works will continue to enable the regeneration of the town centre to move forward. A number of significant letting announcements are also likely to be made during the third quarter, starting with the Fenwick anchor department store as momentum for a start on site in 2015 continues to build.

Timothy Wheadon
Chief Executive

Section 2: Key Indicator Performance

Adult Social Care, Health and Housing

Ind Ref	Short Description	Previous Figure Q1 2014/15	Current figure Q2 2014/15	Current Target	Current Status	Comparison with same period in previous year
ASCHH All Sections - Quarterly						
NI135	Carers receiving needs assessment or review and a specific carer's service, or advice and information (Quarterly)	9.9%	12.6%	15.6%		
OF2a.1	Permanent admissions to residential or nursing care per 100,000 population 18 - 64 (Quarterly)	2.7	2.7	3.4		
OF2a.2	Permanent admissions to residential or nursing care per 100,000 population 65 or over (Quarterly)	100.5	113.9	321.7		
L172	Timeliness of financial assessments (Quarterly)	97.0%	97.6%	95.0%		
Community Mental Health Team - Quarterly						
OF1f	Proportion of adults in contact with secondary mental health services in paid employment (Quarterly)	13.8%	Data not yet released	13.0%	N/A	N/A
OF1h	Proportion of adults in contact with secondary mental health services living independently, with or without support (Quarterly)	78.4%	Data not yet released	84.0%	N/A	N/A
Community Response and Reablement – Quarterly						
OF2c.1	Delayed transfers of care - total delayed transfers per 100,000 population (Quarterly)	9.3	8.1	8.0		
OF2c.2	Delayed transfers of care - delayed transfers attributable to social care per 100,000 population (Quarterly)	4.9	3.6	5.0		
L135.1	Percentage of Enhanced Intermediate Care Referrals seen within 2 hours (quarterly)	92.3	92.2	95.0		
L135.2	Occupational Therapy assessments that were completed within 28 days of the first contact (Quarterly)	99.4%	98.6%	90.0%		New indicator
L214	Delayed transfers of care (delayed bed days) from hospital per 100,000 population (Quarterly)	1,005.3	397.7	666.5		New indicator
Community Team for People with Learning Difficulties - Quarterly						
OF1e	Adults with learning disabilities in paid employment (Quarterly)	15.8%	16.3%	15.0%		
OF1g	Adults with learning disabilities who live in their own home or with their family (Quarterly)	87.8%	87.0%	85.0%		
Housing - Benefits - Quarterly						
NI181	Time taken to process Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events (Quarterly)	6.0	7.0	10.0		
L033	Percentage of customers receiving the correct amount of benefit (Sample basis) (Quarterly)	98.9%	98.6%	97.0%		
L177	Average time from when customer first	5	Data not	10	Awaiting	Awaiting data

Ind Ref	Short Description	Previous Figure Q1 2014/15	Current figure Q2 2014/15	Current Target	Current Status	Comparison with same period in previous year
	seen to receipt of benefit payment (Quarterly)		yet available		data	
Housing - Forestry - Quarterly						
L030	Number of lifelines installed (Quarterly)	149	159	130		
Housing - Options - Quarterly						
NI155	Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) (Quarterly)	9	5	4		
L178	Number of household nights in B&B across the quarter (Quarterly)	1,851	2,119	1,650		
L179	The percentage of homeless or potentially homeless customers who the council helped to keep their home or find another one (Quarterly)	83.33%	90.24%	90.0%		

Children, Young People & Learning

Ind. Ref	Short Description	Previous Figure Q1 2014/15	Current figure Q2 2014/15	Current Target	Current Status	Comparison with same period in previous year
Children's Social Care - Quarterly						
NI043	Young people within the Youth Justice System receiving a conviction in court who are sentenced to custody (Quarterly)	0.09	0.00	0.00		
CSP9.01	Reduce the reoffending rate of the Bracknell Forest local cohort of all young offenders (Quarterly)	0.50 (Freq) 17.2% (Binary) Mar 14	0.59 (Freq) 19.0% (Binary) Jun 14	No target set	N/A	N/A
L092	Number of children on protection plans (Quarterly)	120	123	No target set	N/A	N/A
L140	Percentage of children looked after in family placement or adoption (Quarterly)	67.3%	67%	64%		
L161	Number of looked after children (Quarterly)	108	112	No target set	N/A	N/A
Learning and Achievement - Quarterly						
NI103.1	Special Educational Needs - statements issued within 26 weeks - excluding exception cases (Quarterly)	100.0%	90.9%	100.0%		
NI103.2	Special Educational Needs - statements issued within 26 weeks - all cases (Quarterly)	100.0%	84.6%	90.0%		
L139	Schools judged good or better by Ofsted (Quarterly)	64%	64.0%	75%		
Strategy, Resources and Early Interventions - Quarterly						
NI067	Percentage of child protection cases which were reviewed within required timescales (Quarterly)	100.0%	100.0%	98.0%		
L141	Number of youth centre attendances (Quarterly)	6,760	4,599	4,500		
L203	Number of Referrals to Early Intervention Hub (Quarterly)	92	71	No target set	N/A	New indicator
L204	Number of CAF or Family CAFs	105	42	No target set	N/A	New indicator

Ind. Ref	Short Description	Previous Figure Q1 2014/15	Current figure Q2 2014/15	Current Target	Current Status	Comparison with same period in previous year
	undertaken (Quarterly)			set		

Corporate Services

Ref	Short Description	Previous Figure Q1 2014/15	Current Figure Q2 2014/15	Current Target	Current Status	Comparison with same period in previous year
Customer Services - Quarterly						
L051	Percentage of current year's Council tax collected in year (Quarterly)	29.27%	57.09%	57.2%		
L053	Percentage of current year's Business Rates collected in year (Quarterly)	31.10%	57.14%	55.7%		
L194	Percentage of calls answered within 20 seconds (Quarterly)	53.50%	65.0%	80.0%		
L221	Satisfaction level expressed in survey of contact with Customer Services, across all channels (Quarterly)	67.60%	86.0%	75.0%		Revised indicator for this year
Finance - Quarterly						
BV8	Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days (Quarterly)	92.3%	91.6%	95.0%		
L065	Return on investments exceeds 7 day LA cash benchmark rate (Quarterly)	0.49%	0.50%	0.50%		
ICT - Quarterly						
L086.1	Number of Freedom of Information requests received (Quarterly)	280	297	No target set	N/A	
L086.2	Percentage of Freedom of Information requests dispatched (where 50% or more of the request) was refused as the information is already publically available (Quarterly)	8%	9%	No target set	N/A	
L086.3	Percentage of Freedom of Information requests dispatched which were refused because the time limit would be exceeded (Quarterly)	2%	3%	No target set	N/A	

Chief Executive's Office

Ind Ref	Short Description	Previous Figure Q1 2014/15	Current Figure Q2 2014/15	Current Target	Current Status	Comparison with same period in previous year
Community Safety - Quarterly						
CSP1.01	Prevent a rise in the number of incidents of Burglary Dwelling (Quarterly)	59	103	76		
CSP11.01	Reduce the number of reported incidents of Nuisance ASB as per CADIS (Quarterly)	991	Awaiting data	1,988	Awaiting data	Awaiting data
CSP2.01	Reduce the number of reported criminal offences committed by the Domestic Abuse Service Co-ordination (DASC) cohorts (Quarterly)	Not Available	Awaiting data	32.4	Awaiting data	Awaiting data
CSP2.02	Reduce the number of Children on Child Protection Plans where DA is a factor and the perpetrator has participated in the DAPS programme (Quarterly)	8	Awaiting data	8	Awaiting data	Awaiting data

Ind Ref	Short Description	Previous Figure Q1 2014/15	Current Figure Q2 2014/15	Current Target	Current Status	Comparison with same period in previous year
CSP7.01	Reduce the number of reported incidents of theft from motor vehicle (Quarterly)	69	69	99		
CSP7.02	Reduce the number of reported incidents of theft of motor vehicle (Quarterly)	19	15	28		
L185	Reduce all crime (Quarterly)	1,131	2,258	2,439		
Overview and Scrutiny - Quarterly						
L116	Percentage of high level complaints dealt with in accordance with corporate standards (Quarterly)	88%	91%	93%		
L132	Cumulative number of local government ombudsman complaints requiring a local settlement (Quarterly)	0	0	2		

Environment, Culture & Communities

Ind Ref	Short Description	Previous Figure Q1 2014/15	Current figure Q2 2014/15	Current Target	Current Status	Comparison with same period in previous year
Environment & Public Protection - Quarterly						
NI191	Residual household waste in kgs per household (Cumulative figure for 13/14 reported quarterly in arrears)	669 (Q4)	173 (Q1)	161		
NI192	Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting (Cumulative figure for 13/14 reported quarterly in arrears)	36.3% (Q4)	41.1% (Q1)	42.0%		
NI193	Percentage of municipal waste land filled (Cumulative figure for 13/14 reported quarterly in arrears)	23.52% (Q4)	21.07% (Q1)	25.0%		
L128	Number of reported missed collections of waste (Quarterly)	133	141	180		
L146.1	Percentage of borough where environmental cleanliness is above EPA standard - Litter (Quarterly)	100.0%	100.0%	99.0%		
L146.2	Percentage of borough where environmental cleanliness is above EPA standard - Detritus (Quarterly)	100.0%	100.0%	97.0%		
L146.3	Percentage of borough where environmental cleanliness is above EPA standard - Graffiti and Fly posting (Quarterly)	100.0%	100.0%	99.0%		
L183	Percentage of food establishments in Bracknell Forest rated 4 or above on the food hygiene rating scheme at the end of the quarter (Quarterly)	83.1%	83.1%	80.0%		
L201	Percentage of the Borough's households participating in recycling reward scheme (Quarterly)	22.0%	22.9%	18.0%		New indicator
NI197	Improved local biodiversity -- proportion of local sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented (Annually)	51% (12/13)	53% (13/14)	50%		
Leisure and Culture - Quarterly						

Ind Ref	Short Description	Previous Figure Q1 2014/15	Current figure Q2 2014/15	Current Target	Current Status	Comparison with same period in previous year
L003	Number of visits to leisure facilities (Quarterly)	595,979	1,192,872	1,000,000		
L017	Number of web enabled transactions in libraries (Quarterly)	25,007	50,505	84,345		
L018	Number of web enabled transactions in leisure (Quarterly)	7,712	14,409	17,000		
L020	Number of people enrolled in the Leisure Saver Scheme (Quarterly)	583	563	520		
L035	Income from Leisure Facilities (Quarterly)	2,844,000	5,807,000	5,018,000		
L151	Number of visits to libraries (Quarterly)	88,978	191,383	191,500		
Planning and Transport - Quarterly						
NI154	Net additional homes provided (Quarterly)	48	102	No quarterly target set	N/A	
NI157a	Percentage of major applications determined in 13 weeks (Quarterly)	100%	85%	80%		
NI157b	Percentage of minor applications determined in 8 weeks (Quarterly)	80%	83%	80%		
NI157c	Percentage of other applications determined in 8 weeks or within an agreed extension of time period (Quarterly)	90%	89%	90%		
L008	Number of planning applications received to date (Quarterly)	308	313	No target set	N/A	
L009	Number of full search requests received (Quarterly)	425	374	No target set	N/A	
L014	Number of people slightly injured in road traffic accidents in the preceding 12 months (percentage change) (Quarterly)	-28.3%	-21.2%	No target set	N/A	
L046	Percentage of full searches answered in 10 working days (Quarterly)	100%	100%	90%		
L175	People killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents in the preceding 12 months (percentage change) (Quarterly)	-25.0%	-27.8%	No target set	N/A	

Traffic Lights		Performance Trend	
Compares current performance to target		Identifies direction of travel compared to same point in the previous year or quarter	
	On, above or within 5% of target		Performance has improved (more than 5% from same point in previous year or quarter)
	Between 5% and 10% of target		Performance sustained (within 5% of same point in previous year or quarter)
	More than 10% from target		Performance has declined (more than 5% from same point in previous year or quarter)

The following key indicators are annual measurements where data is not due to be reported this quarter:-

Adult Social Care, Health & Housing

Ind Ref	Short Description
OF1c.1	Proportion of social care clients receiving Self Directed Support (Annually)
OF1c.2	Proportion of social care clients receiving Direct Payments (Annually)
OF2b	Proportion of older people who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation services (Annually)
OF3a	Overall satisfaction of people who use the service with their care and support (Adult Social Care Survey) (Annually)
OF3b	Overall satisfaction of carers with social services (Adult Social Care Survey) (Biennially)
L032	Number of benefits prosecutions and sanctions per 1000 caseload (Annually)
NI155	Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) (Annually)

Children, Young People & Learning

Ind Ref	Short Description
NI019	Rate of proven re-offending by young offenders (Annually)
NI061	Timeliness of placements of looked after children for adoption following an agency decision that the child should be placed for adoption (Annually)
NI062	Stability of placements of looked after children - number of placements (Annually)
NI063	Stability of placements of looked after children - length of placement (Annually)
NI064	Child Protection Plans lasting 2 years or more (Annually)
NI065	Percentage of children becoming the subject of a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time (Annually)
NI066	Looked after children cases which were reviewed within required timescales (Annually)
NI147	Care leavers in suitable accommodation (Annually)
NI148	Care leavers in suitable education, employment or training (Annually)
L188	Percentage of single assessment for children's social care carried out within 45 working days (Annually)
L189	Percentage of referrals to children's social care going on to single assessments (Annually)
L205	Number of adoptive families recruited (Annually)
L206	Recruit foster carer households (Annually)
NI111	First time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17 (Annually)
NI073	Achievement at level 4 or above in Reading, Writing and Maths at Key Stage 2 (Annually)
NI075	Achievement of 5 or more A(star)-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths (Annually)
NI079	Achievement of a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19 (Annually)
NI080	Achievement of a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19 (Annually)
NI081	Inequality gap in the achievement of a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19 (Annually)
NI082	Inequality gap in the achievement of a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19 (Annually)
NI087	Secondary school persistent absence rate (Annually)
NI091	Participation of 17 year-olds in education or training (Annually)
NI092	Narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20 per cent in the Early Years Foundation

Ind Ref	Short Description
	Stage Profile and the rest (Annually)
NI102.1	Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers - Key Stage 2 (Annually)
NI102.2	Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers - Key Stage 4 (Annually)
NI103.1	SEN - statements issued within 26 weeks - Percentage of final statements of special educational needs issued within 26 weeks excluding exception cases (Annually)
NI103.2	SEN - statements issued within 26 weeks - Percentage of final statements of special educational need issued within 26 weeks (Annually)
NI107	Key Stage 2 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups containing more than 30 pupils who achieve level 4 in Reading (Annually)
NI108	Key Stage 4 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups (Annually)
NI114	Rate of permanent exclusions from school (Annually)
NI117	16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, training or employment (NEET) (Annually)
L153	Percentage of children looked after (as at 31st March) reaching level 4 in Reading at Key Stage 2 (Annually)
L154	Percentage of children looked after (as at 31st March) reaching level 4 in Maths at Key Stage 2 (Annually)
L155	Percentage of children looked after achieving 5 A(star)-C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (including English and Maths) (Annually)
L158	Reduction in number of schools where fewer than 60% of pupils achieve Level 4 in Reading, Writing and Maths at KS2 (Annually)
L190	Percentage of children looked after (as at 31st March) reaching level 4 in Writing at Key Stage 2 (Annually)
L192	Key Stage 2 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups containing more than 30 pupils who achieve level 4 in Writing (Annually)
L193	Key Stage 2 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups containing more than 30 pupils who achieve level 4 in Maths (Annually)
L195	Percentage of children who achieve or exceed levels of attainment at the end of the Foundation Stage as measured by the EYFSP in all of the Early Learning Goals for Communication and Language, Physical Development, Personal Social and Emotional development, Literacy and Mathematics (Annually)
L207	Analysis of primary school performance data and track pupil progress (Annually)
L208	Analysis of secondary school performance data and track pupil progress (Annually)
NI067	Percentage of child protection cases which were reviewed within required timescales (Annually)

Corporate Services

Ind Ref	Short Description
NI006	Participation in regular volunteering (Biennially) (every two years – 2014 Q4)
BV156	Percentage of buildings open to the public which are suitable for and accessible to disabled people (Annually – Q4)
L075	Number of commercial property voids (Annually – Q4)
L052	Cumulative percentage of Council Tax collected for the previous year at 31 March (Annually – Q4)
L054	Cumulative percentage of business rates collected for the previous year at 31 March (Annually – Q4)
L060	Percentage response to the annual canvass (Annually – Q3)

Ind Ref	Short Description
L070	Percentage of employees with a disability (Annually – Q4)
L071	Percentage of black and ethnic minority employees (Annually – Q4)
L072	Gender pay gap (Annually – Q4)
L073	Average number of off the job training days per employee (Annually – Q4)
L130	Percentage staff voluntary turnover (Annually – Q4)
L131	Percentage of staff leaving within one year of starting (Annually – Q4)
L174	Average number of working days lost to sickness per employee (Annually – Q4)
L078	ICT User satisfaction - service user survey (Bi-annually) (Annually – Q3)

Chief Executive's Office

There are no key indicators within the Chief Executive's Office reported on annually.

Environment, Culture & Communities

Ind Ref	Short Description
NI191	Residual household waste in kgs per household (Annually)
NI192	Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting (Annually)
NI193	Percentage of municipal waste land filled (Annually)
NI196	Improved street and environmental cleanliness -- fly tipping (Annually)
NI167	Congestion - average journey time per mile during the morning peak (Annually)
NI168	Principal roads where maintenance should be considered (Annually)
NI169	Non-principal classified roads where maintenance should be considered (Annually)
L200	Percentage of the Borough's households participating in recycling (Annual)
NI154	Net additional homes provided (Annually)
L160	Supply of ready to develop housing sites (Annually)
L175	People killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents in the preceding 12 months (percentage change) (Annually)

Section 3: Corporate Health

A) Summary of Complaints

Corporate Complaints

The total number of corporate complaints received this quarter was 13.

The total number of corporate complaints received this year to end September was 27.

Department	Stage	New complaints activity in Q2	Complaints activity year to date	Outcome of total complaints activity year to date
Adult Social Care, Health & Housing	Stage 2	3	4	2 partially upheld, 2 not upheld
	Stage 3	0	0	
	Stage 4	1	1	Not upheld
	Ombudsman	0	1	Not upheld
Children, Young People & Learning	Stage 2	0	1	Partially upheld
	Stage 3	1	1	Partially upheld
	Stage 4	1	1	On-going
	Ombudsman	0	0	
Corporate Services	Stage 2	5	6	2 upheld, 1 partially upheld, 3 not upheld
	Stage 3	0	2	
	Stage 4	0	0	1 partially upheld, 1 not upheld
	Ombudsman	0	0	
Chief Executive's Office	Stage 2	0	0	
	Stage 3	0	0	
	Stage 4	0	0	
	Ombudsman	0	0	
Environment, Culture & Communities	Stage 2	0	2	1 upheld, 1 not upheld
	Stage 3	1	2	2 upheld
	Stage 4	1	2	2 not upheld
	Ombudsman	0	4	3 not upheld, 1 on-going

Statutory Complaints

The total number of statutory complaints received this quarter was 8.

The total number of statutory complaints received this year to end September was 13.

Department	Stage	New complaints activity in Q2	Complaints activity year to date	Outcome of total complaints activity year to date
Adult Social Care, Health & Housing	Statutory Procedure:	5	10	3 upheld, 2 partially upheld, 1 not upheld and 4 on-going.
	Ombudsman	0	0	
Children, Young People & Learning	Statutory Procedures:			1 on-going, 1 upheld 1 on-going
	Stage 1	2	2	
	Stage 2	1	1	
	Stage 3	0	0	
	LSCB complaint procedure	0	0	
	Ombudsman	0	0	

No complaints were received in respect of Public Health.

B) Audits with Limited or No Assurance Opinions

During the quarter there was one finalised limited assurance opinion which was Heathlands residential and day services in Adult Social Care, Health & Housing.

C) Summary of People

Staff Turnover

Department	Quarter 2 (%)	For the last four quarters (%)	Notes
Adult Social Care, Health & Housing	2.26%	9.74%	Staff Turnover has increased this quarter from 1.81% to 2.26%. This increase is due to the increase in voluntary leavers and a couple of voluntary retirements.
Corporate Services	2.83%	7.34%	Voluntary Turnover for this quarter has increased with 6 leavers leaving voluntarily. This has meant the annual figure has increased but it still stands well below the average for the Authority.
Chief Executive's Office	10.71%	29.63%	CXO are currently waiting for the new Community Safety Officer to start.
Children, Young People & Learning	4.79%	14.77%	Quarter 2 often has a high turnover in CYPL as many working in Education choose to leave at the end of an academic year. There are six SW/ATM jobs currently being advertised and two new apprentices started this quarter.
Environment, Culture & Communities	3.22%	11.32%	The vacancy rate has increased this quarter due to there being 2 additional vacancies (45). Quarterly staff turnover has increased as there are 3 more leavers compared to last quarter. Annual staff turnover has increased this quarter as there were more leavers in the last four quarters (66) compared to the four quarters ending 30 June 2014 (63).

Comparator data	%
Total voluntary turnover for BFC, 2013/14	12.64%
Average UK voluntary turnover 2012	10.6%
Average Public Sector voluntary turnover 2012	8.7%

(Source: XPerfHR Staff Turnover Rates and Cost Survey 2013)

Staff Sickness

Department	Quarter 2 (days per employee)	2014/15 Projected Annual Average (days per employee)
Adult Social Care, Health & Housing	2.03	7.57
Corporate Services	0.67	2.64
Chief Executive's Office	1.33	10.89
Children, Young People & Learning	1.53	5.42
Environment, Culture & Communities	1.50	4.80

Adult Social Care, Health & Housing – There are 11 cases of Long Term Sickness. Of these cases three have left the organisation, seven have returned to work and one has not yet returned but is being monitored by Occupational Health.

Corporate Services – Sickness for this quarter stands at 142.5 days which is similar to the last quarter figure of 138.5 days. There have been no days attributable to long term sick this quarter. The annual average absence figure of 2.64 is lower than the actual for last year for the Authority and also slightly lower than last year's figure for Corporate Services. Corporate Services once again compares favourably with absence levels throughout the whole authority.

Chief Executive's Office – The number of days of sickness has decreased to 36 this quarter from 111 in the last quarter. There were 23 days due to long term sickness but this person has now left the Authority.

Children, Young People & Learning – 58% absence was due to 8 long term sickness cases, 6 of which arose during this quarter and the other two arose in Q1. 4 cases have been resolved. The 4 on-going cases are all within Children's Social Care and these are being managed under the absence management policy in conjunction with Occupational Health. 68% of the absence in the branch (241 working days) is accounted for by long term sickness. 70% of the absence in Learning and Achievement was due to three long term sickness cases which have been resolved.

Environment, Culture & Communities – Sickness this quarter has increased compared to last quarter (526.5 days), which is mainly due to an increase in long-term sick (503 days this quarter), compared to last quarter (184 days). However, it should be noted that the split this quarter between short term and long term (42.9%/57.1%) is more in line with normal sickness levels (around 50:50 split).

Staff Sickness Comparators

Comparator data	All employees, average days sickness absence per employee
Bracknell Forest Council 13/14	5.50 days
All local government employers 2012	9.0 days
All South East Employers 2012	8.7 days

(Source: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development Absence Management survey 2013)

D) Summary of Money

At the end of the second quarter the budgetary control reports for the General Fund reported a potential over spend of £1.134m. Details of individual variances are outlined in each department's Quarterly Service Report (QSR).

This net over spend comprises the following:

- Placement costs within Children's Social Care exceed the current budget (£0.286m). There have been a number of changes to the forecast made when the budget was set in December, which in line with the budget strategy of the Council included removing costs of known leavers but not adding a provision for future placements. Overall, there are 10.5 FTE extra high cost placements being supported compared to when the budget was set, 8 of which are with in-house fostering.
- The staffing budget in Children's Social Care remains under pressure, primarily due to the use of relatively high cost agency staff to cover staff vacancies and absences. The current estimate is for an additional cost of £0.260m compared to having staff in post and paid on Council grades.
- The Council, along with its re3 partners, are involved in a contractual dispute in respect of recycle income. After many months of discussion and a successful adjudication hearing in July it was hoped that a settlement could be agreed. The contractor is, however, intending to appeal against the outcome of the hearing. Income of -£0.567m is required to be received in this financial year to achieve the budget. As the outcome of the legal process is far from certain at this stage a pressure has been declared.
- New contracts covering Landscape, Street Cleansing and Highway Maintenance services commenced on 1 October 2014. Net savings have been achieved which are currently estimated to be -£0.225m in excess of the previously budgeted savings in 2014/15.

It is anticipated that the over spend will be managed downwards. The over spend also excludes the £1.030m balance on the Contingency.

In addition to the above variances a significant pressure has been identified within the ring fenced Schools Budget relating to post-16 high needs pupils. This relates to a reduction in DSG funding, underlying cost pressures from 2013/14 and number of unforeseen placements that have been required from the start of the academic year. The over spend in this area now totals £1.093m and whilst a significant element can be met from accumulated reserves of £0.691m, it is not sustainable in the medium term. A detailed review of all placements is currently under way and a range of actions have been taken aimed at reducing the forecast over spend.

At this stage in the financial year there remain significant risks to the budget. Those budgets representing the greatest risk will continue to be scrutinised in detail as part of the Council's usual budget monitoring arrangements.

**TO: OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION
29 JANUARY 2015**

**EXECUTIVE KEY AND NON-KEY DECISIONS RELATING TO
CORPORATE ISSUES
Assistant Chief Executive**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents scheduled Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions relating to corporate issues for the Commission's consideration.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission considers the scheduled Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions relating to corporate issues appended to this report.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To invite the Commission to consider scheduled Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 Consideration of Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions alerts the Commission to forthcoming Executive decisions and facilitates pre-decision scrutiny.
- 5.2 To achieve accountability and transparency of the decision making process, effective Overview and Scrutiny is essential. Overview and Scrutiny bodies are a key element of Executive arrangements and their roles include both developing and reviewing policy; and holding the Executive to account.
- 5.3 The power to hold the Executive to account is granted under Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 which states that Executive arrangements of a local authority must ensure that its Overview and Scrutiny bodies have power to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the Executive. This includes the 'call in' power to review or scrutinise a decision made but not implemented and to recommend that the decision be reconsidered by the body / person that made it. This power does not relate solely to scrutiny of decisions and should therefore also be utilised to undertake pre-decision scrutiny.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

No advice was sought from the Borough Solicitor, the Borough Treasurer or Other Officers or sought in terms of Equalities Impact Assessment or Strategic Risk Management Issues. Such advice will be sought in respect of each Executive Forward Plan item prior to its consideration by the Executive.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT/ STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES / OTHER OFFICERS/ CONSULTATION – Not applicable

Contact for further information

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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION**EXECUTIVE WORK PROGRAMME**

REFERENCE:	I051746
TITLE:	Overview & Scrutiny Commission Review of Business Rates
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To consider the Executive's response to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission Working Group's review of business rates.
DECISION MAKER:	Executive
DECISION DATE:	10 Feb 2015
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	Additional cost arising from the introduction of a Discretionary Business Rate Relief Scheme.
CONSULTEES:	N/A
CONSULTATION METHOD:	None

REFERENCE:	I046447
TITLE:	Capital Budget 2015/16
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To recommend to Council the annual budget.
DECISION MAKER:	Executive
DECISION DATE:	10 Feb 2015
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	Council's annual budget
CONSULTEES:	Targeted consultation exercises will be undertaken with business rate payers, the Schools Forum, Parish Councils and voluntary organisations. In addition, this report and all the supporting information will be publicly available to any individual or group who wish to comment on any proposal included within it. Internal consultation is via officers, members and more specifically the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and its panels.
CONSULTATION METHOD:	The Council's web site, a dedicated mailbox and a letter to all business ratepayers.

Unrestricted

REFERENCE:	I046352
TITLE:	Revenue Budget 2015/16
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To recommend to Council the annual budget
DECISION MAKER:	Executive
DECISION DATE:	10 Feb 2015
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	Council's annual budget
CONSULTEES:	Targeted consultation exercises will be undertaken with business rate payers, the Schools Forum, Parish Councils and voluntary organisations. In addition, this report and all the supporting information will be publicly available to any individual or group who wish to comment on any proposal included within it. Internal consultation is via officers, members and more specifically the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and its panels.
CONSULTATION METHOD:	Method of Consultation: The Council's web site, a dedicated mailbox and a letter to all business ratepayers.

REFERENCE:	I050620
TITLE:	Voluntary Sector Core Revenue Grants 2015-16
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	The Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection is requested to agree the Voluntary Sector Core Revenue Grants for 2015-16.
DECISION MAKER:	Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection
DECISION DATE:	18 Mar 2015
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	Contained within the report.
CONSULTEES:	Members of Corporate Management Team
CONSULTATION METHOD:	Report to the Corporate Management Team

Unrestricted

REFERENCE:	I050267
TITLE:	Contract Award for the Supply of Telecoms, Network Links and ISP Connections
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To agree the award of the contract for the Supply of Telecoms, Network Links and ISP Connections
DECISION MAKER:	Executive
DECISION DATE:	31 Mar 2015
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	Within current budgets.
CONSULTEES:	Meetings with interested parties including procurement, legal and finance officer groups.
CONSULTATION METHOD:	Meetings with interested parties

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**TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
29 JANUARY 2015**

**WORK PROGRAMME AND PANEL ACTIVITY UPDATE REPORT
Assistant Chief Executive**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Work Programme for 2014-15 and Panel activity, with particular reference to Working Groups of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

2 RECOMMENDATION

That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

- 2.1 **Reviews the progress by the O&S Commission and the O&S Panels against the work programme**
- 2.2 **Notes the progress achieved to date by the Commission's Working Group.**

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

O&S Work programme

- 3.1 The O&S Work Programme for 2014-15, incorporating (where available) each Chairman's assessment of progress, is at Appendix 1.

Business Rates Working Group

- 3.2 This Working Group, comprising Councillors Angell (Lead Member), Leake, Heydon and Virgo, commenced on 19 May and has completed its work. The Working Group's report is included at item 7 on the agenda, for adoption by the O&S Commission.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS/ EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT/ STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES / OTHER OFFICERS/ CONSULTATION – Not applicable

Contact for further information

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Monitoring Of Work Programme for Overview and Scrutiny in 2014/15

The Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Chairmen's assessment of the progress on the work programme for O&S in 2014/15 is shown below, where the symbols represent:



Completed or on course for completion



Delayed or completion at risk



Will not be achieved in 2014-15

Comments by O&S Commission Chairman

There has been no major change in the work or work programme for the Commission this quarter. Actions arising from the meeting in November have been dealt with and advised to members. The report of the Working group on Business Rates will be presented at the meeting and is the result of extensive research and much effort by both members and officers. One matter which needs further discussion and review is the report on the implications of the Francis Report (which arose from the crisis at the Mid - Staffordshire Health Trust). A meeting is to be arranged between the Commission Chairman, Health OSC Chairman and the Head of O&S to review the recommendations and establish a way forward.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION		Status / Comment
1.	Co-ordination of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels	
2.	Routine monitoring of the performance of the Council's corporate functions	
3.	Exercising pre-decision scrutiny by reference to the Executive Forward Plan	
4.	2015/16 Budget Scrutiny To review the Council's budget proposals for the Chief Executive's Office and the Corporate Services Department for 2015/16, and plans for future years. To include a discussion with the Borough Treasurer during 2014 on the evolving budgetary position.	
5.	Crime and Disorder Committee To include an annual meeting with representatives of the Community Safety Partnership.	
6.	Other Policy Development To make an input to the review of the <u>Economic Development Strategy</u> .	

7.	Business Rates To review the impact of Re-Localisation of Business Rates, and the connection with economic development initiatives.	
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ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL		Status / Comment
1.	Monitoring the performance of the Adult Social Care, Health and Housing Department To include receiving statutory plans and reports (such as the annual reports on complaints received), monitoring the action taken by the Executive to earlier reports by the Panel, and being briefed on the implications of new legislation, including the Government's Care Bill.	
2.	Exercising pre-decision scrutiny by reference to the Executive Forward Plan	
3.	2015/16 Budget Scrutiny To review the Council's Adult Social Care and Housing budget proposals for 2015/16, and plans for future years.	
4.	The Council's Role In Regulated Adult Social Care Services To complete the review of the Council's role in regard to care governance and managing safeguarding in regulated services.	
5.	Forestcare A review of the lifeline alarms and other services provided under Forestcare.	

Comments by Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairman

The working group has met four times since the last panel meeting and members visited New Hope on their Christmas open day.

The working group are hoping to have the draft report ready for the March meeting.

The panel looked closely at the recruitment of teachers and senior management in our schools at the last panel meeting. David Watkins gave a very informative presentation and the panel is going to review recruitment at subsequent meetings.

The draft budget was scrutinised, the Annual report of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, the Annual report of complaints and compliments and the Annual report of the statutory roles and responsibilities of the Director and Lead Member for Children's Services. The work programme for 2015 was reviewed.

The next panel meeting is on the 4th March 2015 at 7.30pm.

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL		Status / Comment
1.	<p>Monitoring the performance of the Children, Young People and Learning Department</p> <p>To include receiving statutory plans and reports (such as the annual reports of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, and on complaints received). Monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of Looked After Children, and the implications for service delivery and resources; • Schools' performance, particularly secondary schools; • The action taken by the Executive to earlier reports by the Panel 	
2.	Exercising pre-decision scrutiny by reference to the Executive Forward Plan	
3.	<p>2015/16 Budget Scrutiny</p> <p>To review the Council's Children, Young People and Learning budget proposals for 2015/16, and plans for future years.</p>	
4.	<p>The Provision of School Places</p> <p>To complete the review of the Council's arrangements for planning and providing places for children in Bracknell Forest's schools.</p>	
5.	<p>Substance Misuse</p> <p>Further to the 2012-13 review by the Adult Social Care and Housing O&S Panel, to review actions to minimise substance misuse by children and young people.</p>	

ENVIRONMENT CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL		Status / Comment
1.	<p>Monitoring the performance of the Environment, Culture and Communities Department</p> <p>To include the performance of the Leisure operations, review of any inspection reports or self-evaluations; monitoring the action taken by the Executive to earlier reports by the Panel, and monitoring significant departmental developments.</p>	

2.	Exercising pre-decision scrutiny by reference to the Executive Forward Plan	
3.	2015/16 Budget Scrutiny To review the Council's Environment, Culture and Communities budget proposals for 2015/16, and plans for future years.	
4.	Cultural Services To complete the review of the Council's cultural services offering, in the context of pressure on public finance, with particular reference to libraries and assistance for South Hill Park.	

Comments by Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairman

Summary of work during 2014

Following the recommendation from the Francis Report - the panel adopted individual responsibility for different parts of the NHS. The idea behind this was to enable members to specialise in certain areas and thus improve the depth of scrutiny, given both member's time and availability. We suspended additional reports to concentrate on members area of expertise and meet every 6 weeks. The panel has also been strengthened with the addition of Dr Norman who brings his practical and technical experience as a GP to our meetings and panels. We also have a regular dialogue with Healthwatch Bracknell to monitor the topics and matters of concern that are being discussed locally.

It has been a busy year catching up with the re-organisation of the Heath Service.

At the start of the year we held an additional special meeting to consider the CQC second report and findings on Wexham Park Hospital. It was extremely serious and members questioned in great details the findings with both the Chairman and Chief Executive. I summed up at the end of the meeting on behalf of the panel the seriousness which members viewed the report and the urgency and importance of correcting all the service shortcomings.

As well as meeting our principle partners of the NHS Trusts operating in our area during the year, we visited the Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust facility at Prospect Park in Reading. It specialises in mental and community health services and in addition we received a detailed briefing on mental health provision.

I would like to thank the members, Cllr Birch, Lisa McNally, Glyn Jones and his officers and Richard Beaumont for their help during the year.

HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL		Status / Comment
1.	Implementing the new Approach to Health Scrutiny To deliver the new approach to health scrutiny as recommended by the Panel's Working Group on the Francis report. This might in due course lead to a focussed review in 2014/15 or later years	

2.	2015/16 Budget Scrutiny To review the Council's budget proposals for public health in 2015/16, and plans for future years.	
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**TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
29 JANUARY 2015**

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROGRESS REPORT Assistant Chief Executive

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report highlights Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) activity during the period June to November 2014.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **To note Overview and Scrutiny activity and developments over the period June to November 2014, set out in section 5 to 6, and Appendices 1 and 2.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Chief Executive has asked for a six monthly report to be produced on O&S activity.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Overview and Scrutiny Structure and Membership

- 5.1 Council and the O&S Commission respectively appointed members to the vacant positions on the Commission and two of the O&S Panels. Action continues to be taken periodically on the long-running vacancy for a representative of the Catholic Diocese. Rev Parish resigned from the position of Church of England representative on the O&S Commission and the Children, Young People and Learning O&S Panel on 7 November, and a replacement is being sought.

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and Working Groups

- 5.2 The programme for 2014-15 has progressed broadly as planned, and a routine report has been submitted to each O&S Commission meeting, monitoring progress against the O&S Work Programme, using traffic light indicators, and with particular reference to the Commission's own Working Groups. Activity and output levels in the second half of the year will probably be lower owing to the local government elections in 2015 and anticipated staff sickness absence.
- 5.3 The table at Appendix 1 sets out the current status of the O&S Working Groups, along with the list of completed reviews.

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

- 5.4 The O&S Commission met on 10 July, 4 September, and 22 October. The main items included:
- Meeting the Director of Security of Broadmoor Hospital and the Local Police Area Commander, regarding the effect of the re-development on security arrangements at the hospital. The Commission Chairman subsequently wrote to the West London Mental Health Trust, conveying the Commission's concerns over the Trust's proposed decommissioning of many of the Broadmoor alert sirens. This was followed by a meeting on the same topic, including the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Trust. Wokingham Borough councillors were invited to participate in the meeting, as they had previously raised similar concerns.
 - Discussing with representatives of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS): the context for RBFRS; the Service's new policy direction, plans and priorities; and the role and contribution of the Service to community safety locally. In preparation for that meeting, members of the O&S Commission visited Bracknell Fire Station on 29 August to meet RBFRS front-line staff.
 - Reviewing the quarterly performance reports for the Corporate Services Department, the Chief Executive's Office and the Council as a whole. Also reviewing the bi-annual progress report of O&S.
 - Reviewing corporate items on the Executive Forward Plan.
- 5.5 Between formal meetings, the Commission's activities have included, for example:
- Visiting Thames Valley Police's control centre and performance information team at Kidlington in June.
 - Visiting Bracknell Fire Station in August.
- 5.6 The O&S Commission's next meeting is on 20 November, when the main items will be: meeting representatives of Thames Valley Probation Service and the Community Rehabilitation Company to consider their role, plans and priorities; and discussing with the Executive Member for Transformation and Finance, and the Borough Treasurer the evolving budgetary position, in preparation for scrutiny of the 2015/16 budget proposals. The Commission's Working Group on Business Rates, which commenced on 19 May, continued to make good progress during the period, and it is expected to complete its work within the next two months.

Environment, Culture and Communities O&S Panel

- 5.7 Meetings of the Panel were held on 24 June and 23 September, 2014. During the meetings the Panel considered and commented on:
- Electing a Chairman and appointing a Vice Chairman.
 - Quarterly Service Reports for the relevant quarters.
 - Service Plan 2014/15 - Revised Key Actions and Indicators.
 - Residents' Parking Scheme – Consultation Outcome and Final Scheme Proposals.
 - Draft Obligation Supplementary Planning Document.
 - Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan Update.
 - Public Realm – Progress with Mobilisation.
 - Supported Bus Service Contracts 2015.
 - Enforcement Policy (Regulated Services).
 - Parks and Open Spaces Quality Improvements – Jocks Lane Recreation Ground and Sandhurst Memorial Park.
 - Draft Cultural Services O&S Report.
 - Working Group Update Report.
 - Scheduled Executive key and non-key decisions.

- 5.8 A review of Cultural Services, in the context of pressure on public finance, with particular reference to libraries and assistance for South Hill Park, has been undertaken by a working group of the Panel and the Executive's response to the completed report is now awaited (see Appendix 1).
- 5.9 Actions arising from Panel meetings have resulted in the circulation to Panel Members of the number of e+ smartcards issued or reissued during 2013-14, the number of fixed notices issued during the last year, details of the route of the Sandhurst Shopper 598 bus service and the officers' response to a Member's request that consideration be given to extending the route of the 108 bus service to serve the local Community Centre. In addition, the Panel requested that an analysis of the content of compliments received and any associated learning points be included in future Quarterly Service Reports. The next meeting of the Panel is taking place on 13 January 2015.

Health O&S Panel

- 5.10 The Panel met on 3 July and 2 October. The main items considered at those meetings included:
- Electing a Chairman and appointing a Vice Chairman.
 - Meeting the Chief Executive of Frimley Park Hospital NHS Trust, with particular reference to the Trust's services to residents, and progress on the Trust's prospective acquisition of Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.
 - Meeting the Director of Nursing of the Bracknell and Ascot Clinical Commissioning Group, regarding the quality of patient care at the main local hospitals, with reference to the results of the 2013 survey of adult inpatients.
 - Reviewing the quarterly performance reports of the Adult Social Care, Health and Housing department, relating to public health.
 - Adopting a Protocol between the Health & Wellbeing Board, Healthwatch Bracknell Forest and the Health O&S Panel.
 - Meeting the Berkshire Healthcare NHS Trust, with particular reference to their mental health services to residents of Bracknell Forest. In preparation for that meeting, members of the Panel received a briefing on mental health, and visited the in-patient mental health facility at Prospect Park Hospital, in September.
 - The bi-annual progress report of Overview and Scrutiny.
 - Receiving questions under the public participation scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.
 - Receiving a presentation on Public Health's first year in the Council, and future plans.
 - The 2013-14 Annual report of Healthwatch Bracknell Forest.
 - Reviewing the information from the NHS Choices website, for the NHS Foundation Trusts providing most NHS services to Bracknell Forest residents.
 - Considering scheduled Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions relating to Health.
- 5.11 Between formal meetings, the Panel's activities have included, for example:
- Attending the Annual General Meeting of Bracknell and Ascot Clinical Commissioning Group.
 - Raising concerns over patient comfort at the Urgent Care Centre in Bracknell.
 - Observing some meetings of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
 - A trial run of the newly designed induction training for members engaged in health O&S, delivered jointly by Adult Social Care, Health and Housing, also O&S officers.
- 5.12 The Panel's next meeting is on 15 January 2015, when the main items are likely to include scrutiny of the Health element of the Council's Draft Budget Proposals for 2015/16.

Joint East Berkshire with Buckinghamshire Health O&S Committee

- 5.13 This Committee, formed jointly with Slough Borough Council, the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, and Buckinghamshire County Council has remained suspended, the last meeting having been held in March 2013. The O&S Commission had previously decided to end the Council's involvement in the Joint Committee, unless there is a need to respond to a statutory consultation affecting health services in East Berkshire.

Children, Young People and Learning O&S Panel

- 5.14 Meetings of the Panel took place on 11 June and 10 September, 2014. During the meetings the Panel considered and commented on:
- Electing a Chairman and appointing a Vice Chairman.
 - The minutes of meetings of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel.
 - Quarterly Service Reports for the relevant quarters, giving particular attention to outcomes of Ofsted school inspections, 2014 school place allocations and Family Focus, the Council's troubled families initiative.
 - A presentation in respect of substance misuse involving children and young people.
 - The implications of the Children and Families Act 2014.
 - The updated Joint Strategic Plan for Children, Young people and Families 2014-17.
 - Draft School Places O&S Report.
 - The 2013/14 Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer service.
 - A presentation in respect of actions being taken to reduce incidences of bullying.
 - The Common Assessment Framework Annual Report 2013/14.
 - An update on the effective use of the Pupil Premium grant for Looked After Children.
 - The Executive response to the O&S report of the review of School Places.
 - The Development Plan for Community Learning 2014-17.
 - Pan Berkshire Shared Adoption Service.
 - Scheduled Executive key and non-key decisions.
- 5.15 The Panel agreed the report of the review of the planning and provision of school places at its meeting on 11 June 2014 and then received the favourable Executive response to the report at its meeting held on 10 September when it established a new working group to commence a review of the impact of substance misuse on children, young people and their families (see Appendix 1).
- 5.16 Activities between Panel meetings included circulation to Members of some of the child's view sheets used in the Common Assessment Framework, the Local Safeguarding Children's Board Continuum of Help and Support document and the Guide to Child Neglect. In addition, arrangements have been commenced for Panel Members to visit some primary schools in the Borough to ascertain how they are adapting to the move to providing free school meals for all Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils and possibly sample some meals to check the quality and variety before reporting their findings to the next Panel meeting, to be held on 12 January 2015.

Adult Social Care and Housing O&S Panel

- 5.17 The Panel met on 17 June and 16 September, 2014. The main items discussed and considered at the meetings were:
- Electing a Chairman and appointing a Vice Chairman.
 - Quarterly Service Reports for the relevant quarters.
 - Annual Complaints Reports 2013/14 for Adult Social Care and for Housing.
 - Living with Positive Choices: a Community Strategy for Adults with Long Term Conditions aged 18-64 years - review of Action Plan.
 - Alcohol Brief Intervention in Adult Social Care - progress update.

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- Update on the Care Act 2014 and plans for implementation.
- Adult Social Care Annual Report (Annual Account) 2013/14.
- Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board Annual Report 2013/14.
- Changes to regulation and inspection of Adult Social Care from April 2015.
- The Council's Role in Regulated Adult Social Care Services O&S report.
- Working Group Update Report.
- Scheduled Executive key and non-key decisions.

- 5.18 The Panel monitored progress achieved by its working group reviewing the Council's role with regard to care governance and managing safeguarding in regulated Adult Social Care Services and agreed the resulting report, the Executive's response to which is now awaited (see Appendix 1).
- 5.19 In addition, the Panel discussed future review work having regard to its Work Programme and favoured commencing a review of homelessness when resources became available. The next meeting of the Panel is taking place on 20 January 2015.

Other Overview and Scrutiny Issues

- 5.20 The biennial Members survey results in August 2014 included the following responses relating to O&S:
- 75% net satisfaction with support for O&S.
 - 84% net satisfaction with support by O&S officers.
 - 82% net satisfaction with support by Council departments.
 - 58% regarded O&S to be effective in terms of holding decision makers to account, and in contributing to policy development.
- 5.21 Responses to the feedback questionnaires on the quality of O&S reviews are summarised in Appendix 2, showing a high average score of 2.7 (90%).
- 5.22 Quarterly review and agenda setting meetings between O&S Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen, Executive Members and Directors are taking place regularly for the Panels (every two months for the O&S Commission). Periodic meetings of the O&S Chairmen and Vice Chairmen were suspended in April 2013.

6 DEVELOPMENTS IN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

- 6.1 The only notable developments in O&S in the period covered by this report were the changes to Health O&S arising from the Department of Health's guidance relating to *The Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013*. The main point to be addressed is that if a council decides to delegate its health scrutiny powers and duties to a health scrutiny committee, it need not delegate *all* of its health scrutiny functions to that committee (i.e. it could retain some functions itself). Officer recommendations in that regard have been prepared for consideration by the Governance and Audit Committee, as changes to the Constitution are envisaged.
- 6.2 O&S Officers attended the Centre for Public Scrutiny's annual conference in June.

7 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Statutory Scrutiny Officer

- 7.1 The monitoring of this function is carried out by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer on a quarterly basis. Good progress has been made on the agreed programme of work by Overview and Scrutiny for 2014/15. Scrutiny Panels have continued to focus on areas of importance to local residents, and the quality of the work done continues to be high.

Borough Solicitor

- 7.2 Nothing to add to the report.

Borough Treasurer

- 7.3 There are no additional financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 7.4 Not applicable. The report does not contain any recommendations impacting on equalities issues.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 7.5 Not applicable. The report does not contain any recommendations impacting on strategic risk management issues.

Workforce Implications

- 7.6 Not applicable. The report does not contain any new recommendations impacting on workforce implications.

Other Officers

- 7.7 Directors and lead officers are consulted on the scope of each O&S review before its commencement, and on draft O&S reports before publication.

8 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 8.1 None.

Method of Consultation

- 8.2 Not applicable.

Representations Received

- 8.3 None.

Background Papers

Minutes and papers of meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Panels.

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CXO\Overview and Scrutiny\2014-15\progress reports

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CURRENT WORKING GROUPS – 2014/15

Position at 19 November 2014

Overview and Scrutiny Commission								
WORKING GROUP	MEMBERS	DEPT. LINK OFFICER	O&S LEAD OFFICER	SCOPING	PROGRESS OF REVIEW	REPORT / SUBMISSION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE	CURRENT STATUS
Business Rates	Angell (Lead), Heydon, Leake and Virgo	Alan Nash	Richard Beaumont	√	Information gathering completed.	Report in draft		Commenced 19 May 2014, with seven meetings to date.

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Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel								
WORKING GROUP	MEMBERS	DEPT. LINK OFFICER	O&S LEAD OFFICER	SCOPING	PROGRESS OF REVIEW	REPORT / SUBMISSION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE	CURRENT STATUS
Francis Report on NHS Mid Staffordshire Hospital	Mrs McCracken (Lead), Mrs Angell, Angell, Baily, Kensall, Mrs Temperton, and Virgo	Glyn Jones	Richard Beaumont	√	Completed	√	√	The agreed changes to O&S practices are partly implemented.

Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel								
WORKING GROUP	MEMBERS	DEPT. LINK OFFICER	O&S LEAD OFFICER	SCOPING	PROGRESS OF REVIEW	REPORT / SUBMISSION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE	CURRENT STATUS
Cultural Services Offering	Finnie (Lead) Brossard, Ms Brown, Gbadebo and Thompson	Mark Devon	Richard Beaumont	√	Completed	√	√	Executive response to be considered by Panel at next meeting.

Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel								
WORKING GROUP	MEMBERS	DEPT. LINK OFFICER	O&S LEAD OFFICER	SCOPING	PROGRESS OF REVIEW	REPORT / SUBMISSION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE	CURRENT STATUS
School Places	Mr Briscoe (PGR) (Lead), Mrs Birch, Kensall and Mrs Temperton	Chris Taylor	Andrea Carr	√	Completed	√	√	Recommendations agreed and being implemented.
Substance Misuse – Children and Young People	Mrs Birch (Lead), Mrs Temperton, Mr Briscoe & Mrs Wellsted (PGRs) & Miss Richardson (Teacher rep.)	Jillian Hunt	Andrea Carr	√	Information gathering partially completed.			The review commenced in September and three meetings have taken place to date.

Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel								
WORKING GROUP	MEMBERS	DEPT. LINK OFFICER	O&S LEAD OFFICER	SCOPING	PROGRESS OF REVIEW	REPORT / SUBMISSION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE	CURRENT STATUS
The Council's Role in Regulated Adult Social Care Services	Harrison (Lead), Mrs McCracken, Mrs Temperton and Thompson	Zoë Johnstone	Andrea Carr	√	Completed	√	Awaited	The report has been agreed and forwarded to the Executive for its response.

Completed Reviews

Date Completed	Title
December 2003	South Bracknell Schools Review
January 2004	Review of Adult Day Care Services in Bracknell Forest (Johnstone Court Day Centre & Downside Resource Centre)
May 2004	Review of Community & Voluntary Sector Grants
July 2004	Review of Community Transport Provision
April 2005	Review of Members' Information Needs
November 2005	The Management of Coronary Heart Disease
February 2006	Review of School Transfers and Performance
March 2006	Review of School Exclusions and Pupil Behaviour Policy
August 2006	Report of Tree Policy Review Group
November 2006	Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) – Review of the ASB Strategy Implementation
January 2007	Review of Youth Provision
February 2007	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2006
February 2007	Review of Library Provision
July 2007	Review of Healthcare Funding
November 2007	Review of the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy
December 2007	Review of the Council's Medium Term Objectives
March 2008	2007 Annual Health Check Response to the Healthcare Commission
April 2008	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/08
May 2008	Road Traffic Casualties
August 2008	Caring for Carers
September 2008	Scrutiny of Local Area Agreement
October 2008	Street Cleaning
October 2008	English as an Additional Language in Bracknell Forest Schools
April 2009	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2008/09

Unrestricted

Date Completed	Title
April 2009	Healthcare Commission's Annual Health Check 2008/09 (letters submitted)
April 2009	Children's Centres and Extended Services in and Around Schools in Bracknell Forest
April 2009	Older People's Strategy
April 2009	Services for People with Learning Disabilities
May 2009	Housing Strategy
July 2009	Review of Waste and Recycling
July 2009	Review of Housing and Council Tax Benefits Improvement Plan
December 2009	NHS Core Standards
January 2010	Medium Term Objectives 2010/11
January 2010	Review of the Bracknell Healthspace (publication withheld to 2011)
January 2010	14-19 Years Education Provision
April 2010	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2009/10
July 2010	Review of Housing and Council Tax Benefits Improvement Plan (Update)
July 2010	The Council's Response to the Severe Winter Weather
July 2010	Preparedness for Public Health Emergencies
October 2010	Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults in the context of Personalisation
October 2010	Review of Partnership Scrutiny
December 2010	Hospital Car Parking Charges
January 2011	Safeguarding Children and Young People
March 2011	Review of the Bracknell Healthspace (Addendum)
April 2011	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2010/11
June 2011	Office Accommodation Strategy
June 2011	Plans for Sustaining Economic Prosperity
July 2011	Review of Highway Maintenance (Interim report)
September 2011	Performance Management Framework

Unrestricted

Date Completed	Title
September 2011	Review of the Council's Medium Term Objectives
October 2011	Plans for Neighbourhood Engagement
October 2011	Regulation of Investigatory Powers
October 2011	Site Allocations Development Plan Document
January 2012	Common Assessment Framework
February 2012	Information and Communications Technology Strategy
April 2012	NHS Trusts Quality Accounts 2011/12 (letters submitted to five Trusts)
April 2012	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2011/12
June 2012	Commercial Sponsorship
July 2012	Communications Strategy
November 2012	Proposed Reductions to Concessionary Fares Support and Public Transport Subsidies
November 2012	Modernisation of Older People's Services
January 2013	Preparations for the Community Infrastructure Levy
February 2013	Substance Misuse
February 2013	'Shaping the Future' of Health Services in East Berkshire
April 2013	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13
April 2013	NHS Trusts Quality Accounts 2011/12 (letters submitted to three Trusts)
July 2013	School Governance
September 2013	Delegated Authorities
October 2013	Bracknell Forest Bus Strategy
January 2014	Applying the Lessons of the Francis Report to Health Overview and Scrutiny
April 2014	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/14
June 2014	Review of School Places
September 2014	Review of Cultural Services

Results of Feedback Questionnaires on Overview and Scrutiny Reports

Note – Departmental Link officers on each major Overview and Scrutiny review are asked to score the key aspects of each substantive review on a scale of 0 (Unsatisfactory) to 3 (Excellent)

	Average score for previous 21 Reviews ¹
PLANNING Were you given sufficient notice of the review?	2.9
Were your comments invited on the scope of the review, and was the purpose of the review explained to you?	2.9
CONDUCT OF REVIEW Was the review carried out in a professional and objective manner with minimum disruption?	2.7
Was there adequate communication between O&S and the department throughout?	2.8
Did the review get to the heart of the issue?	2.6
REPORTING Did you have an opportunity to comment on the draft report?	2.8
Did the report give a clear and fair presentation of the facts?	2.5
Were the recommendations relevant and practical?	2.6
How useful was this review in terms of improving the Council's performance?	2.6
Overall average score	2.7

¹ Road Traffic Casualties, Review of the Local Area Agreement, Support for Carers, Street Cleaning, Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities, English as an Additional Language in Schools, Children's Centres and Extended Services, Waste and Recycling, Older People's Strategy, Review of Housing and Council Tax Benefits Improvement Plan, 14-19 Education, Preparedness for Public Health Emergencies, Safeguarding Children, Safeguarding Adults, the Common Assessment Framework, Modernisation of Older People's Services, Community Infrastructure Levy, School Governance, Delegated Authorities, Applying the Lessons of the Francis Report, and School Places.

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
29 JANUARY 2015**

**2015/16 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME
Assistant Chief Executive****1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report invites members to propose items for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's work programme for 2015/16.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission proposes items for inclusion in the Commission's work programme for 2015/16.**

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 To assist Members' consideration of possible items for inclusion in the Commission's work programme for 2015/16, the previously completed reviews are listed on the following page, also the work programme for the current year.
- 3.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Panels have also been invited to consider, at their meetings in January 2015, items for their future work programmes. Officers also have items to suggest for members' consideration. The complete draft programme will form part of the annual report of O&S for 2014-15, which will be put forward for O&S Commission approval, and consultation with the Corporate Management Team and the Executive, in due course.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS/ EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT/ STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES / OTHER OFFICERS/ CONSULTATION – Not applicable

Contact for further information

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Previously Completed Overview and Scrutiny Commission Reviews

Date Completed	Title
May 2004	Review of Community & Voluntary Sector Grants
April 2005	Review of Members' Information Needs
December 2007	Review of the Council's Medium Term Objectives
September 2008	Scrutiny of Local Area Agreement
January 2010	Medium Term Objectives 2010/11
October 2010	Review of Partnership Scrutiny
June 2011	Office Accommodation Strategy
June 2011	Plans for Sustaining Economic Prosperity
September 2011	Performance Management Framework
September 2011	Review of the Council's Medium Term Objectives
October 2011	Plans for Neighbourhood Engagement
October 2011	Regulation of Investigatory Powers
February 2012	Information and Communications Technology Strategy
July 2012	Communications Strategy
January 2013	Preparations for the Community Infrastructure Levy
September 2013	Delegated Authorities
January 2015	Review of Business Rates and discretionary relief

2014-15 Overview and Scrutiny Commission Work Programme

Co-ordination of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels
Routine monitoring of the performance of the Council's corporate functions
Exercising pre-decision scrutiny by reference to the Executive Forward Plan
2015/16 Budget Scrutiny
Crime and Disorder Committee

<p>Other Policy Development</p> <p>To make an input to the review of the <u>Economic Development Strategy</u>.</p>
<p>Business Rates</p> <p>To review the impact of Re-Localisation of Business Rates, and the connection with economic development initiatives.</p>

FUTURE PROPOSED REVIEWS (Unlikely to be resourced until 2015/16 or later)	
1.	<p>Learning and Development</p> <p>To review the Learning and Development functions for officers, with an emphasis on E-Learning activities.</p>
2.	<p>Category Strategy</p> <p>To review the impact of Category Strategies on procurement, and possible future developments.</p>
3.	<p>Medium Term Objectives</p> <p>To contribute to the review of the Council's Medium Term Objectives following local government elections in May 2015.</p>
4.	<p>Economic Development</p> <p>To review the implementation and outcomes of the Local Economic Development Strategy.</p>
5.	<p>Bracknell Town Centre – Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour</p> <p>To review the crime and anti-social behaviour issues arising from the growth in the night-time economy in the regenerated Bracknell Town centre.</p>

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