

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
PANEL
22 SEPTEMBER 2015
7.35 - 9.30 PM**



Present:

Councillors Angell (Chairman), Porter (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Angell, Brossard, Finnie, Mrs Ingham, Mrs McKenzie and Mrs Mattick

Executive Members:

Councillors Mrs Hayes MBE and Turrell

Also Present:

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

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Mrs McKenzie-Boyle

68. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 7th July 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

There were no matters arising.

69. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

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

70. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

71. Public Participation

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

72. Local Bus Services - Update

The Chief Officer: Planning and Transport gave an update on local bus provision in the borough. The existing supported bus provision contract had ended earlier this year and officers had used the opportunity to review existing provision and procure a more efficient service. The new contract had been awarded to Courtney Buses.

Members noted that the £600K subsidised bus service was discretionary. However, the concessionary fares scheme was mandatory and was not funded by Government. Members noted that health care facilities were accessible to all residents by bus although this could involve changing buses to reach the intended destination.

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

- It was intended that evening bus services would be introduced in the future to serve the night economy of the new town centre.
- Bus services serving the town centre could be commercially viable and discussions with operators were being held.
- The introduction of later bus services to cater for commuters would require Council subsidy or developer contributions if viable.
- Bus routes were designed to serve sheltered housing as many bus users were elderly.
- Some new operators were providing bus services in the Borough using good quality vehicles and positive comments had been received.

73. **Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan**

The Chief Officer: Environment and Public Protection informed Members that it was necessary to prepare the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan in order to support bids for highways funding from the Government. The plan set out how the Council currently managed the assets and what steps could be taken in future to maintain the assets.

Members requested that progress against all the five national goals, as listed on page 15 of the plan, be measured and monitored in future.

Members noted that many traffic diversions in place appeared to be excessively long when shorter routes were available. Members were concerned about the impact on emissions levels as a result of increased journey length. The Chief Officer explained that traffic diverted from A roads could only be diverted down another A road and this was to do with the nature of vehicles travelling on these roads. It would be inappropriate to send heavy traffic through residential roads as this would cause a nuisance to residents. An explanation of the rationale behind the Rackstraw Road diversion would be provided. It was also noted that emissions were higher from idling the engine rather than running the engine whilst driving continuously. The intention was that new developments would cater for future environmental considerations such as charging points for electric cars.

Members expressed concern about the future maintenance cost linked to landscaping with particular reference to trees. The Director of Environment, Culture and Communities explained that officers were aware of the financial implications involved in tree maintenance and sought to include appropriate low maintenance species in all landscaping designs.

Members expressed concern about the tone of the letter sent to residents asking for existing trees to be pruned. The Director agreed to review the letter and revise it, if necessary.

74. **Changes to the Method of Collecting Christmas Trees**

The Chief Officer: Environment and Public Protection informed the Panel that as a result of the type of waste collecting vehicles being used by the Council and the large

uncut Christmas trees left for collection by residents last year, issues had arisen and it had become necessary to revise the policy.

The vehicles used in green recycling could not accommodate large unchopped Christmas trees being tossed into the back of the truck as they were not designed for this purpose.

It was proposed that residents who had subscribed to the green waste collection service could put chopped down Christmas trees in their brown garden waste bins or garden refuse sacks. Other residents could either pay for a Christmas tree collection service or take the Christmas tree to the Longshot Lane recycling site.

Members noted that there would be a communications campaign to make residents aware of the changes to the Christmas tree collection service.

75. Control of Horses Act 2015

The Chief Officer: Environment and Public Protection advised Members that a change in the Animals Act 1971 gave local authorities the power to detain horses fly grazing in a public place. The Council would give the horse owner a minimum of 96 hours notice of the intention to remove the horse from public land. If the Council removed a horse the course of action would be as follows:

- Contact horse welfare charities to see if they wanted the horse at their own expense
- Sell the horse at a horse auction
- Send the horse for slaughter to an abattoir

Members noted that so far no horses had been sent to the abattoir.

76. Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan Update

The Chief Officer: Planning and Transport gave an update on progress of the Local Plan which set out policies and proposals for the development and use of land in the Borough taking account of social and environmental factors.

Members noted that a report on the Strategic Housing Market Assessment would be taken to the Members working group on 12 October 2015.

77. Draft Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The Chief Officer: Planning and Transport gave an update on the draft Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document which had been approved by the Executive. The first part of the policy looked at changes to existing provision such as car parks and on street parking. The second part looked at guidelines for future parking on new developments.

Members noted that a public consultation would take place and the public could comment on the proposals. The public could comment in writing or via an online consultation. The consultation process would be publicised in line with the community consultation policy.

The Panel made the following comments on the document:

- That the visitor parking of 1 space for every 5 dwellings was too low and should be reconsidered.

- That the provision of parking bays in areas where existing parking problems existed should be a priority over the protection of landscape and trees.
- That the courtyard style parking provision was well designed.

It was agreed that these points would be considered as part of the response to the Parking Standards consultation.

78. **Working Group Update Report**

The Lead Member of the Working Group gave a progress update in respect of its activities. At its second meeting, on 7 September 2015, the Working Group reviewed the Local Enforcement Plan. Future work would include meeting the Borough Solicitor and discussing planning matters with Elmbridge Borough Council, which had been commended in a national award in 2015. The next meeting of the Working Group would take place on 29 September 2015. Although it had been envisaged that the Working Group would complete its review by the end of December, this date had been revised to January 2016 at the earliest owing to the amount of work involved.

79. **Quarterly Service Report (QSR) - Information Item**

The Director of Environment, Culture and Communities gave a presentation updating the Panel in respect of the latest available departmental performance information as reported in the QSR for the first quarter of 2015/16 (April to June 2015). The presentation featured revenue finance, major variances on revenue, capital finance, carry forward of capital budgets, staffing, key highlights and a forward look.

The Council had negotiated a £150k rate reduction for the Bracknell Forest Leisure Centre and it was expected to reduce the legal fees associated with the waste management contract.

Some capital projects over £50k that were included in this year's budget would partly take place in the next financial year.

These projects were:

- Disabled Facilities Grant
- Capitalisation of Highways Work
- Maintenance – Street Lighting
- Land Drainage
- Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Enhancement Works
- Maintenance Car Parks
- Town Centre Highways Works
- Coral Reef - Refurbishment Works
- Coral Reef – Roundabout Signalisation

Members noted that pricing for the leisure centre activities was reviewed annually leading up to the budget setting process after a competitive analysis of similar facilities was undertaken.

The Panel requested that leisure activity price concessions, particularly at the Downshire golf complex, be reviewed.

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

There were no Member comments on scheduled executive key or non-key decisions.

CHAIRMAN