

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND  
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY  
PANEL  
5 JULY 2016  
7.30 - 8.58 PM**



**Present:**

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

**Executive Members:**

Councillors Turrell

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Mrs Mattick

**In Attendance:**

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

**104. Election of Chairman**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Angell be elected Chairman of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

**COUNCILLOR ANGELL IN THE CHAIR**

**105. Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Porter be elected Vice-Chairman of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

**106. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 23 March 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

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

**108. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

109. **Public Participation**

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

110. **Preliminary Outcomes of the Residents' Parking Scheme**

The Panel considered a report about the outcome of the consultation on the two year trial of the residents parking scheme. The Panel was reminded of the reasons for carrying out the trial, to protect vulnerable areas of the Borough from parking by non-residents, which it was considered would be an increasing problem as the town centre redevelopment progressed.

The Council had received 436 eligible responses to the consultation representing a 30% response rate from the households affected. The survey had covered a range of issues about the scheme, the application process, enforcement etc. but the key question sought views as to the future of the scheme. The report contained details for each of the six zones in the trial scheme, showing the number of properties, the number of responses, the numbers either supporting or against continuing with charges and the percentages for each. It was difficult to draw an overall conclusion from the consultation but it seemed there was general support for residents parking although there was no wish to have to pay for it.

The Panel asked a number of questions from which the following points arose:

- It would be possible to implement a scheme omitting some of the areas included in the trial. While this may lead to a marginal reduction in the overall cost, that cost would have to be recovered from a smaller number of properties which would result in higher proposed charges for the permits than those consulted upon.
- If it was proposed to proceed with an amended scheme, the Council would need to consider whether to carry out a further consultation.
- If the scheme was abandoned, it would be possible to re-instate it at a later date if parking by non-residents increased significantly resulting in a substantial demand for action by the residents affected.

Panel Members expressed some disappointment that there had not been a greater response from residents to the consultation although it was noted that a 30% reply rate was quite good for such surveys. The view was expressed that a low response could be taken to mean that there was a reasonable degree of satisfaction with the trial scheme. In conclusion the consensus view of the Panel was that the residents parking scheme should be continued, but possibly in amended form. The views of Ward Members for the areas affected were considered to be most valuable and arranging a session at which these could be expressed and discussed was felt to be a very good suggestion. It was hoped this would assist and inform the report and recommendations to be made to the Executive.

111. **Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

The Panel received a report presenting a draft Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which, once approved by the Executive, would be subject to public consultation in the Autumn.

The purpose of a Design SPD was to assist with the implementation of current planning policies and provide prospective applicants with a clearer idea of the Council's expectations for design. The draft comprised an introduction followed by

sections on Design and Context; Built Form and Spaces; and Extending your Home. When adopted, the SPD would sit alongside current planning policies but would also form part of the emerging Local Plan.

The Local Plan Working Group had also considered the draft document. It was noted that the maps and images contained in the draft had yet to be finalised.

The Panel took the view that the draft Design SPD was a clear and well written document that would be a valuable guide for developers, agents and householders. A request was also made that consideration be given as to whether it would be appropriate to include design guidance on basement parking in dwellings, since this had proved to be an issue in some recent applications.

#### **112. Bracknell Forest Local Plan Update**

The Panel considered a report summarising the up to date position on the various documents comprising the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan (BFBLP).

The early stage Issues and Options public consultation for the Comprehensive Local Plan (CLP) was currently under way, running until 25 July 2016. The Panel commented favourably on the summary consultation leaflet which was attached to the report as an appendix. In the Autumn, consideration would be given to the sites which might be brought forward for development in the light of the responses to the consultation.

Further progress had been made on the evidence based studies which would support the formulation of policies within the CLP. This included the appointment of consultants jointly with Wokingham Borough Council to carry out a Green Belt Review across both Boroughs.

It was planned to produce a Joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan with other Berkshire Authorities. Options as to who could best assist in carrying out the work were being explored.

The Parking Standards SPD adopted in March 2016 had now been fully implemented.

#### **113. Executive Response to the Report of the Overview & Scrutiny Review of Procedures for Planning Applications and Enforcement**

The Panel received a report containing the Executive response to the report of the Overview and Scrutiny review of Procedures for Planning Applications and Enforcement.

The Executive had commended the Working Group for the review it conducted and the helpful report produced. The Panel was pleased to note that the majority of the Working Group recommendations had been agreed in whole or in part by the Executive. An explanation and reasons had been given in the case where a recommendation had not been agreed.

The changes now approved by the Executive were in the process of being implemented. However, a number of the changes affecting delegation to officers and the Planning Protocol required amendments to be made to the Constitution and would be built into the next Constitution review.

**114. Next Review Topic/Working Group**

The Panel considered a report containing an invitation to select the topic for its next review and to establish a working group to undertake it.

The Panel noted the Work Programme it had set out for 2016/17 and the list of future possible reviews for 2017/18 and beyond. Interest had previously been expressed in reviewing houses in multiple occupation, for which an in-depth study would be required to cover all aspects of the topic.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1 Houses in multiple occupation be confirmed as the next topic for review.
- 2 A Working Group comprising the Chairman and Councillors Brossard, Finnie, Mrs Ingham and Mrs McKenzie-Boyle be established to carry out the review.

**115. Overview and Scrutiny Progress Report**

The Panel received and noted the Overview and Scrutiny progress report setting out the activity and developments over the period December 2015 to May 2016.

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

The Panel considered the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the QSR for the fourth quarter of 2015/16 (January to March 2016) relating to Environment, Culture and Communities. The report highlighted exceptional performance, remedial action being taken against under performance, significant changes in risk, significant customer feedback and inspections and significant changes in service use and the associated financial impact.

The Director of Environment, Culture and Communities presented to the Panel a number of highlights from the report, including an update on those areas where the position had moved on since the end of the last quarter. The outturn for the net revenue budget was £22,255,984, an underspend of £1,089,016. The Director outlined where the major variances had occurred, a number of which arose from higher than expected income, with the most significant being a saving of £310,000 on waste disposal costs due to lower tonnages. Capital spending during the year amounted to £14,939,408. This meant that there was a small underspend on projects together with a carry forward of £7,183,400 for projects either delayed or re-programmed. In future it was proposed to monitor and report on capital spending on the known spend on projects as they proceeded.

The percentage rise in the average staffing vacancy factor to 9.48% was queried and the Director undertook to clarify the figure. Staff turnover for the year was 10.78%, slightly up from the previous year but still at a very satisfactory level. Staff sickness at an annual average of 5.54 days per employee remained at an excellent low level, reflecting the well managed monitoring of sickness absence by managers.

Departmental changes arising from the departure of the Chief Officer: Leisure and Culture meant that Leisure and Recreation Services now reported directly to the Director and Parks and Countryside now reported to the Chief Officer: Planning and Transport.

Looking forward, the Panel noted that the contract for the Coral Reef refurbishment project had been signed on 4 July 2016, but on the basis of a letter of intent the

contractor had made an early start on site and was making very good progress. The gateway reviews being carried out under the Transformation Programme were proceeding with the leisure review and libraries review next to be undertaken. The Director proposed to brief the Panel at its next meeting about options for a Shared Public Protection Service with other Berkshire Authorities coming forward for consideration.

Arising from questions, the Panel noted:

- The changes in the operation of Edgbarrow Sports Centre were as a result of decisions taken by the school to reduce the hours available for community use from 1 January 2016 and then cease all daytime community use before 5.30pm from 1 September 2016. The current public consultation concerned the options for future management of the Centre and the Director confirmed that the Joint Management Committee would have the opportunity to feed into this, if necessary through holding an additional meeting, before a report was made to the Executive.
- The 50% recycling target for 2020 derived from EU wide waste targets but it seemed unlikely this would be relaxed by a UK Government outside of EU membership. Irrespective of this, there was a PFI target for the RE3 partnership to recycle 50% of all waste by 2031.
- The Green Deal Communities funding (which had assisted 276 households to improve the energy efficiency of their homes) had now run out. The Department of Energy and Climate Change had confirmed no further grants were available at present.
- A new e-book supplier had been engaged to provide the service where library members could download e-books from the Library website.
- The new Coding Club commencing at Bracknell Library was a computing club and the Panel would be provided with further details.

#### 117. **Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions**

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

**CHAIRMAN**