

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
PANEL
10 JANUARY 2017
7.30 - 9.22 PM**



Present:

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

Executive Members:

Councillors McCracken and Turrell

Also Present:

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

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Finnie and Mrs McKenzie

129. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 20 September 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

There were no matters arising.

130. 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 under the party whip.

131. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

132. Public Participation

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

133. 2017/18 Draft Budget Proposals

The Director of Environment, Culture and Communities presented a report on the key themes and priorities for Environment, Culture and Communities as outlined in the draft budget proposals for 2017/18, which the Executive had approved for

consultation. The initial preparations for the budget had focussed on the Council's Commitment Budget for 2017/18 – 2019/20, bringing together existing expenditure plans, taking account of approved commitments and the ongoing effects of service developments and efficiencies that were agreed when the 2016/17 budget was set.

A number of changes were proposed to the Commitment Budget since it was last considered by the Executive in July 2016, the overall effect of which was to decrease it by £5.107m to £66.988m. Environment, Culture and Communities spending would decrease as a result of its share in the overall in-year savings agreed by the Council, a lower projection for the Minimum Revenue Provision as a result of changes to capital provision (eg. Coral Reef) and updated Waste Disposal projections based on the latest tonnages and recycling data.

The Panel noted the draft revenue budget pressures for the Department totalling £387,000 for 2017/18, of which the most significant were £110,000 for increased waste contract costs arising from the additional flats being built in the Borough; £80,000 on waste management costs for disposal of waste from the additional dwellings built; and £70,000 for the cost of developing a joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan over the next four years. However, these were outweighed by savings proposals amounting to £649,000. The largest savings arising were £150,000 on the formation of a joint Regulatory Services team with Wokingham and West Berkshire; £100,000 as a result of re3 local initiatives and increased levels of recycling; and £75,000 for Bracknell Leisure Centre through recovery of lost business and changes to membership scheme sales. All the savings measures had been designed to have the least possible impact on service to the public. The Panel also reviewed the proposed fees and charges for 2017/18, most of which had been increased by around 2%, unless market conditions suggested that a larger increase was appropriate.

The Panel sought clarification and answers to a number of questions, from which the following arose:

- The possibility of charging commercial interests for consent to attach signage to Council street furniture would be looked into.
- Advice on the Council's VAT charging process had been sought as part of the Gateway Review of Leisure Services. Although some VAT savings might arise if certain leisure services were provided through a Trust or a company wholly owned by the Council, greater economies of scale were likely to arise through outsourcing services to a larger contractor.
- A check was requested of the Building Control charges for other work (Plan Charge) for works where the estimated cost was £5,001 to £10,000 or £10,001 to £20,000, each of which appeared to exceed the charge for more expensive works.

The Panel further noted the 2017/18 Capital Programme bids. The Panel was assured that adequate publicity and the affixing of notices to parking pay machines would be arranged in advance of the installation of new coin mechanisms in the machines, to advise the position on the acceptance or otherwise of new notes and coins in circulation. Members were pleased to note the potential for savings and increased opening hours which would flow from the investment in self-service issue apparatus and mobile technology for Borough libraries.

134. Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2017-20

The Panel considered a report presenting the Council's reviewed and updated Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) 2017-2020.

The Strategy had been drafted taking account of the Council's responsibilities as Lead Local Flood Authority and the assessment of the Borough as being at a low risk of flooding. The approach to managing the local flood risk rested on three overarching principles:

- **Maintain** – ensure that existing water networks are maintained to minimise flood risk;
- **Improve** – assess and improve the existing flood risk situation within the Borough; and
- **Prevent** – work towards preventing and mitigating flood risk within the Borough.

Consultation on the draft Strategy commenced in December, with any comments to be incorporated before it was presented to the Executive on 14 February 2017 for adoption.

Arising from questions, it was explained to the Panel that the planning process required developers to include provisions for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) on all major developments (10 or more units). However, the maintenance of such systems would remain largely in private hands. For smaller developments the same SuDS requirements do not apply. Where householders installed parking areas or hard landscaping controls over the use of materials to be used related to whether planning permission was required or not and if the work was being undertaken in conjunction with the instillation of a dropped kerb. Officers reported on the position in relation some local areas prone to surface water flooding (eg. Rackstraw Road, Sandhurst) and indicated the benefits of modern gully cleaning equipment and use of historical records in setting the frequency of cleansing schedules.

The Panel endorsed the draft LFRMS and requested that a reminder be sent to all Town and Parish Councils to submit their responses by the end of January 2017 to enable the inclusion of any local comments/information in the Strategy to be reported to the Executive.

135. **Coral Reef**

The Head of Performance and Resources made a presentation to the Panel on the progress of the refurbishment at Coral Reef.

Most importantly, the contract was proceeding on time and within budget. The project had entered contingency due to additional works required to the changing village walls; the Coconut Grove ceiling and air handling unit; Sauna World roof replacement; and further roof repairs. These issues had arisen as the existing structure had been dismantled, revealing that some areas had not been built as per the original plans, and no operation and maintenance manual had been provided by the original contractor (who had subsequently gone into liquidation).

The work currently in progress had reached the following stage:

- Old roof removal with a start on the replacement
- Flat roof to the changing village
- Flume tower up to second floor landing
- Flume sections starting to arrive on site
- Flume column bases completed
- Splash pool steel frame erected along with brickwork enclosure

The Panel viewed photographs of the works in progress and received answers to questions on matters of detail. A résumé of the remaining work to take the project

through to completion was given, for a scheduled opening date of 18 August 2017. Complimentary comments were made about the latest website update on progress of the scheme and the wide interest generated as a result of the media site visit. Further media information was proposed over the next phase. The Panel was assured that none of the shortcomings of the contractor on handover of the original building would be repeated.

136. **Bracknell Forest Borough 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 preparation of the Comprehensive Local Plan (CLP) was proceeding in accordance with the timetable set out in the Local Development Scheme and detailed in the report. The work to summarise and analyse the responses to the Issues and Options consultation was ongoing leading up to the Preferred Option Plan consultation programmed for June/July 2017.

Progress on the following documents being prepared as part of the evidence base to support the CLP was reported:

- Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)
- Strategic Housing and Employment Availability Assessment (SHELAA)
- Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)
- Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA)
- Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA)
- Landscape Character Study
- Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA)
- Green Belt Review
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)
- Development Viability

The Panel noted that the SHELAA was a record of sites submitted by interested parties (generally landowners and developers) for potential development. Among the sites submitted was land east of Martins Heron, which along with all the other sites would need to be assessed for availability, suitability and achievability of development. However, the SHELAA would not allocate sites for development and was not a statement of Council policy.

The report also updated the Panel on progress on the preparation of the Joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan (in conjunction with Reading Borough Council, Wokingham Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead) and the production of a Supplementary Planning Document on Design to be considered by the Executive in March 2017.

137. **Working Group Update**

The Panel received a progress report of the Working Group reviewing houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). The review had been scoped at the first meeting of the Working Group and future meetings would look to review the planning and housing functions associated with HMOs and any related anti-social behaviour issues.

138. **Work Programme 2017/18**

The Panel considered its Work Programme for 2017/18.

The Panel favoured a review of Parks and Open Spaces to be carried out next, as it had now risen to the top of the list of future possible reviews. Panel Members were asked to consider whether they would like to be involved in this review and officers were asked to consider how it could be carried out without duplicating work to be undertaken for the Parks and Countryside review forming part of the Transformation Programme which would start in April 2017.

139. Overview and Scrutiny Progress Report

The Panel received and noted the Overview and Scrutiny bi-annual progress report setting out the activity and developments over the period June to November 2016.

140. Quarterly Service Report (QSR)

The Panel considered the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the QSR for the second quarter of 2016/17 (July to September 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 highlighted a number of items from the report and gave an overview of the third quarter performance. He indicated the major variances on the revenue budget, currently amounting to a £459,000 decrease, and predicted the underspend would be around £0.5m at the end of the year. The capital budget for the current year was currently 50% spent, which would rise to approximately 85% at the year end, the remainder being carried forward. Key highlights also included a special mention of those departmental services which had been recipients of awards or received external recognition. Reference was made to five of the Borough parks which had been awarded Green Flag status and South Hill Park which had received a gold 'Britain in Bloom' Award. It was also noted that a further Green Flag Award for Westmorland Park had also been awarded.

Among the items mentioned in the forward look, it was noted that a number of the reviews included in the Transformation Programme were moving forward and would begin to deliver on the savings identified. Staff were working with the schools to ensure a smooth transition for the Edgbarrow and Sandhurst Sports Centre at the end of March 2017 and work was proceeding towards some joint arrangements across Berkshire to support a more resilient emergency planning service.

141. 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