

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
PANEL
18 SEPTEMBER 2018
7.30 - 8.55 PM**



Present:

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

Executive Members:

Councillor Turrell, Executive Member for Planning & Transport

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Porter, Mrs Hayes MBE and McCracken

In Attendance:

Gill Vickers, Interim Executive Director: Delivery
Andrew Hunter, Director: Place, Planning & Regeneration

15. Minutes and Matters Arising

Councillor Mrs McKenzie requested her apologies be added to the minutes 3 July 2018.

Subject to the amendment above it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel held on 3 July 2018 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

16. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations.

There were no indications that members would be participating while under the party whip.

17. Urgent Items of Business

Bracknell Shopmobility

The Chairman informed members he had recently received a letter from Bracknell Shopmobility which requested the charity's grant reduction be brought to the ECC Panel's attention. The letter from Acting Chairman of Bracknell Shopmobility, Bob Draper, argued previous assumptions regarding increased footfall to Bracknell Town Centre had not resulted in increased traffic to their shop in Princess Square or helped alleviate the effect of grant reductions. Members noted Bracknell Shopmobility, similarly to other grant funded organisations, had been given four years notice to plan for their grant reduction. They queried how much the reduction over four years equated to and the Chairman said it was approximately £30k per annum. The Panel noted the letter had been sent to the Leader of the Council and agreed the Chairman write a letter to the Acting Chairman of Bracknell Shopmobility reflecting the fact they had discussed the issue as requested.

Action

- **Chairman to send a letter to the Acting Chairman of Bracknell Shopmobility reflecting discussion at the meeting.**
- **Governance & Scrutiny Co-ordinator to send extract of minutes relating to this item to the Leader of the Council.**

18. Public Participation

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

19. Leisure Transformation Review

Nick Smith, Head of Leisure at Bracknell Forest Council and David Love, Area Contract Manager, Everyone Active, gave members an update regarding the progress of the Leisure Transformation Project and the contract management of Everyone Active.

Members were informed the 10 year contract, from 1 March 2018, gave the Council a guaranteed monthly management fee (rising in 2019) and would result in a new fitness suite, additional studio space and a renewed café and reception area at Bracknell Leisure Centre. It was hoped this would lead to an increase in footfall. These improvements would not have been possible without the partnership with Everyone Active.

Challenges to date were related to maintenance issues which, in turn, had led to a rise in complaints. Some maintenance issues related to pre-project work and could not be carried out in a timely fashion but had now been completed. To resolve these issues the previous Director of Environment, Culture and Communities had met with the manager of Everyone Active and morale was now purported to have increased and there had been a decrease in the number of complaints both to Everyone Active and to the Council.

Measures to ensure improvements continued included quarterly reports from Everyone Active to the Council; mystery visits from an independent company; weekly meetings to monitor the contract and the introduction of seven mini events to ask customers what issues they had still. The Council had recently received a report from the independent company responsible for the mystery shoppers, which was the same company used when Bracknell Leisure Centre was Council controlled, and found Bracknell Leisure Centre achieved a higher score than ever before.

Nick Smith, Head of Leisure, informed members that whilst improvements were being made the Council audit department would audit the management of the contract next year, which was early, to see if changes were required to the management of the contract.

Members were asked to note the Council still owned large assets at Bracknell Leisure Centre, Coral Reef Waterworld and Devonshire Golf Complex and were still responsible for the fabric of the buildings and major plants/equipment. Everyone Active were responsible for maintenance so the Council would scrutinise their records to ensure maintenance was up to standard.

David Love, Area Contract Manager, Everyone Active, noted Coral Reef Waterworld numbers were good at the moment.

The following issues were discussed and responses given:

- Concern expressed about the maintenance of the artificial pitches at Bracknell Leisure Centre as a walking football group had complained to a Councillor about the artificial grass 'coming out in lumps'. Nick Smith, Head of Leisure, said the pitches had only recently been installed so it would be a maintenance issue rather than requiring replacement and agreed to monitor this in the coming months. David Love, Area Contract Manager, Everyone Active, said he had spoken to the bookings team at Bracknell Leisure Centre that day about the pitches and confirmed they were being swept as per the requirements stated in the contract. He thought it was an issue with people wearing the wrong shoes and they intended to put up additional signage to ensure people wore the correct footwear on the astro pitches.
- Youths had been seen hanging around in the reception area and being abusive. David Love, Area Contract Manager, Everyone Active, explained they were public buildings but that issues such as these were being monitored and there were actions they could take if this became a recurrent issue, such as additional security officers. He also noted there were CCTV cameras installed in the reception area.
- Figures showed the number of people attending Devonshire Golf Club and junior courses had decreased and queried if it was related to the removal of the paper version of the brochure. David Love, Area Contract Manager, Everyone Active, said the weather had affected Devonshire Golf Club during the spring due to unseasonal snow and rain but had picked up over the summer and were yet to show in the statistics. Junior courses were being actively promoted and it was one of their internal Key Performance Indicators. They were putting up large posters within buildings as well as increasing their online publicity of these courses.
- The closure of Edgbarrow Sports Centre to the public during school hours had not seen the majority of customers transfer to Bracknell Leisure Centre but it was hoped the £2.8m investment would attract more customers in the future.
- Members commended Everyone Active for having stands at the 'Summer of Fun' event run by Bracknell Forest Council and the enthusiasm of staff on the stalls.
- There had been problems originally with bookings at Coral Reef Waterworld but Everyone Active had transferred their bookings system to a third party which had resolved issues. There had also been maintenance issues with the flumes and they had been switched off at times, although this was rare. Flumes were ordinarily turned off during non-peak times (school hours).
- Members requested a quarterly report be brought to the Panel containing complaints and compliments and how issues were going to be resolved.

Actions

- **Damian James, Assistant Director, Contract Services, to bring a quarterly report to the Panel outlining complaints and compliments received by Everyone Active regarding the leisure facilities they manage on behalf of Bracknell Forest Council and how issues were being resolved.**

20. Highways Winter Service Plan 2018/19

Jim Naylor, Senior Engineer, explained to members how the Council discharged its duty to ensure it is 'reasonably practicable' for the public to access highways during the winter months. This included annually reviewing the 'Highways Winter Service Plan'; assessing and categorising newly adopted roads; reviewing requests for salt

bins and ensuring sufficient Salt Gritters and salt stores would be available if there was a heavy snowfall.

The following issues were discussed and responses given:

- Members queried the amount of salt stored and were informed it was approximately 2,000 tonnes at any one time. The national requirements were that the Council stored enough for 12 days.
- The Council had three large gritting vehicles and two smaller ones. The large gritters did not go down to road level in case they damaged cats eyes, humps, etc. Gritters could also be fitted with snow ploughs and go ahead of waste collection services if necessary. Gritters both cleared and salted at the same time.
- Salt bins were located according to the gradient of the road but a number of Parish Councils had paid to install additional salt bins in their areas.
- The cost to place, fill and collect a salt bin for the season was £106.01, with an additional £53.06 each time it needed refilling. To provide, place, fill and collect a salt bin was £234.28.
- They received notifications of damage to salt bins and kept a log. It was noted officers had reacted swiftly in the past to these issues.
- Signs were placed on bins to notify residents that salt contained in bins was for highways only, not personal property use.
- The Council jointly commissioned a weather service 'Meteo Group' to provide the six Berkshire authorities with up to date weather forecasting specifically for road conditions.
- Salt is stored in Downhill Depot and was pre-wetted (salt and brine solution).
- Operatives from Continental Landscape Services helped when weather severe and were able to clear shopping areas, priority approaches to schools, subway ramps but highways were the first priority.
- The total Winter Service budget for 2018/19 was £226,940 and had been reduced extensively over the past few years. Final out turn costs at the end of the season were dependent upon the weather and the budget was overspent last year.

21. **LED Lighting Task & Finish Group**

Members noted the update and were informed Councillor's Brossard and Mrs McKenzie-Boyle would be attending an Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) event in October which would look at good practice in this area.

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

Quarterly Service Reports (i)

Andrew Hunter, Executive Director, Place, Planning & Regeneration, informed members the planned gross revenue budget was £29,873,000. The budget was slightly overspent in Quarter 1 due to less income from concessionary fares as trip rates over had declined over the past few years; an increase in contract costs in environmental services to support newly adopted land and meter reading errors at Coral Reef Waterworld meant the Council had to pay backdated gas charges. However, there had been an under spend of £212k on waste management and additional income from brown bin collections of £53k and contracted services costs were £33k below budget.

Emerging revenue issues for 2018/19 included costs related to an extension to support Easthampstead Park Conference Centre as it had been assumed it would be sold within three months of the financial year. Visitors to the Council's car parks were

less than those estimated at pre-opening. Parking enforcement income was predicted to be £25k below budget and income from resident's parking permits was down. There was likely to be additional pressure to enable the Council to meet its commitments to deliver the Local Development Framework.

With regards to capital expenditure the Department were on track to spend as per commitments. Key highlights included self-service being rolled out in libraries in the Borough; adoption of the Thames Basin Heaths Spatial Protection Area; progression of the sale of Easthampstead Park Conference Centre recycling rates up; new chapel opened at Easthampstead Crematorium; investment in Bracknell Leisure Centre and it was noted they Council had achieved green flag awards for six Council owned parks. There were concerns around the number of planning decisions overturned on appeal which were going to be investigated and members were informed the Council was part of a Group, with other local authorities, looking at decisions.

A new structure had been put in place throughout the Council which meant Gill Vickers was now Interim Executive Director, Delivery and Andrew Hunter had been appointed Executive Director, Place, Planning & Regeneration. Issues they would be concentrating on in the coming months were embedding the new structure; development of QSRs; next stages of the Local Plan; sale of Easthampstead Park Conference Centre, Martin's Heron roundabout conversion, continuation of library service self-service and new technology to be introduced; development of a Country Park proposal and an extension to the Suez contract for waste services.

A discussion took place about why there had been less income from car parks than expected and it was thought people were only staying for up to two hours, much less than anticipated. However, a refurbishment of Princess Square shopping centre; the addition of an upper deck to the multi-storey car park and improvements to the night-time economy were being realised and should increase revenue from car parks in the longer terms. Some members thought this should be considered against the desire to increase the number of people accessing the town centre using public transport or walking.

Members queried if South Hill Park investment was on track and were informed by Gill Vickers, Interim Executive Director, Delivery, discussions were still ongoing about a loan from the Council to South Hill Park to assist with refurbishment of a function room.

Quarterly Service Reports (ii) and (iii)

Daniel Green, Head of Business Intelligence, Public Health, gave an overview of the development of dashboards in Bracknell Forest Council to ensure better and more up to date information was made available to officers and members. The project had been mapped into three parts and the dashboards being developed were in response to issues with the current Quarterly Service Reports (i) which were out of date and only provided data on the previous and current status without allowing for general trend analysis.

QSR (ii) would allow for filtering of data and targets to be tracked but was still driven by PARIS software process which was felt to have drawbacks, including officers not being responsible directly for inputting data.

QSR (iii) would contain data inputted by officers which would save time and allow for better performance analysis and identification of longer term trends. Each person could configure their own individual dashboard, i.e. the Panel could develop one specifically for their needs. It could be put on the internet if required. Gill Vickers,

Interim Executive Director, Delivery, informed members the biggest difference would be data could be drawn down as often as it was reported so up to date.

The following issues were discussed and responses given:

- Members were pleased to see the step-change in the way data would be provided in the future and thought the new dashboard would assist them in carrying out their scrutiny duties.
- There would be potential to RAG rate trend data in the future but this would not be included initially.
- QSR (iii) was an 'off the shelf' package provided by 'Harveyi' and but customised to fit Bracknell Forest Council's needs.

Actions

Governance & Scrutiny Co-ordinator to publish presentation with the minutes.

23. **Executive Forward Plan**

Members received and noted the scheduled Key and Non-Key Executive Decisions relating to Environment, Culture and Communities of a corporate nature.

CHAIRMAN