

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
PANEL
19 SEPTEMBER 2017
7.30 - 9.30 PM**



Present:

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

Executive Members:

Councillors Mrs Hayes MBE and Turrell

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Mattick and McCracken

In Attendance:

Andrew Hunter, Chief Officer: Planning, Transport & Countryside
Damian James, Head of Performance and Resources
Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture & Communities
Marc Rose, Fitness Manager

166. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 11 July 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Arising from minute 163, it was reported that a very interesting and informative briefing session about Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) had been held, although rather poorly attended by members. A separate session would be held for Town and Parish Councillors.

Arising from minute 164, the query raised at the last meeting concerning the vehicular access serving a development scheme in York Town Road, Sandhurst, remained unresolved. Officers were requested to ensure the Highways team enforced the satisfactory completion of the works by the developer without further delay.

167. 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.

168. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

169. Public Participation

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

170. **Annual Review of the General Practitioner Referral Scheme**

The Panel considered a report reviewing the performance of the Activate General Practitioner Referral scheme during 2016/17.

Marc Rose, Fitness Manager, introduced the report and outlined the history of the Activate Health scheme which since 2006 had been run under the BodyWorks umbrella, operating from the Bracknell Leisure Centre. Referrals (numbering 259 in 2016/17) were made from all 16 local GP surgeries in Bracknell Forest with a view to promoting the health benefits of long term regular participation in moderate physical activity and encouraging participation in those not normally active.

BodyWorks had 5 qualified GP Referral Exercise specialists to assess those referred, to support and guide them through the 12 weeks of the scheme, and carry out reviews at 6 weeks and at the end of the scheme. There were also 2 Phase IV Cardiac Instructors to deal with Cardiac Rehab referrals from local hospitals.

Arising from questions and discussion, the Panel noted that:

- Almost half of those referred did not go on to start the scheme, despite telephone and written reminders. Email addresses were rarely provided by the GP surgeries making the referral.
- Some participants did not continue due to a worsening of their condition or a new illness but of those completing the scheme, 94% found it beneficial or very beneficial.
- Referrals in the last year were slightly down on the previous year; this may be attributable to the loss of Edgebarrow Sports Centre (now returned to school control) or the prevalence of other fitness and gym facilities now widely available.
- There were a variety of conditions giving rise to the referrals, including mental illness. More women than men used the scheme.
- The post scheme follow-up showed that there were encouraging numbers who remained active indicating that Activate is successful in the long term.

The Panel congratulated Marc Rose and the team at Bodyworks on the achievements of the scheme.

171. **Bracknell Forest Tree Strategy**

The Panel considered a report presenting a draft Tree Strategy, due to be reported to the Executive for approval to submit for public consultation. The draft Strategy formed an overarching framework by which the Borough will directly and indirectly approach the management of trees on both public and private land.

An independent survey had indicated that 39.8% of the Borough was covered by tree canopy, defining the character of Bracknell Forest and representing a significant natural asset. Adoption of a formal Tree Strategy would enable the Council to play a central role in managing trees for the benefit of the public. The draft Strategy was based around three core values, summarised as follows:

- Significance: recognising the significance of trees in creating the character of Bracknell Forest;
- Active Management: ensuring that the tree resource is actively managed and expanded;
- Stewardship: working to promote understanding and responsible stewardship of all trees on public and private land.

The approach of the Council would be promoted through six themed principles and the Panel noted the following arising from questions and comments:

- The Council had very limited powers to act in relation to trees on private land. However, where trees overhung the highway or where, for instance, there was a health and safety hazard, it was possible to intervene.
- The Strategy would be made available via the Council website/consultation portal and responses invited from Town and Parish Councils, stakeholders and all interested and appropriate local groups.
- There was some concern about the intention to ensure standing and fallen deadwood is left on site unless there were sound conservation and/or safety reasons for its removal. Whilst this was acknowledged good practice for biodiversity, it was considered there may be practical or aesthetic reasons why removal of deadwood may be preferred.
- Timber from felling or lopping had a value and whilst this may not be realisable in cash terms, it provided an opportunity to procure tree works on a cost neutral basis.
- The procedure for making a tree preservation (TPO) order was explained, including the opportunity for interested parties to make comment before an order was confirmed. Where works to a tree were carried out in contravention of a TPO, action could be (and was) taken through issue of a stop notice or bringing prosecution proceedings.
- An important aspect of good tree management and new planting was summed up in the principle of 'the right tree in the right place'. This extended to assessing and maintaining veteran trees and the replacement of ageing street tree populations, using appropriate species suitably located.

The Panel expressed its appreciation of the comprehensive and informative draft Tree Strategy and requested that comments made be passed to the Executive.

172. **Coral Reef**

The Head of Performance and Resources made a presentation to the Panel on the progress of the refurbishment at Coral Reef as it neared completion and opening:

- Practical completion had now been confirmed for Thursday 21 September.
- The detailed discussions with the contractor and Council's Managing Partner concerning the project budget were nearing completion.
- Staff training had commenced on 14 September and the trial/testing events with selected participants were due to take place from 24 to 27 September.
- The finishing touches were now being applied to the interior of the building, together with completion of work to exterior surfaces and general tidying of the site.
- The pool had now been filled and the water was being brought up to temperature. Staff now had access to the five waterslides.
- Interest from the public had been running at a high level, particularly through social media, with around 100,000 Facebook contacts.
- The official opening to the public would take place at 10.30 am on Friday 29 September. Online booking of tickets only would be allowed to begin with and numbers would be carefully controlled. The maximum capacity of the pool was 600.
- Discussions were taking place with the Lord Lieutenant's Office to try and secure the presence of a member of the Royal Family for an official opening in November

The Panel viewed a number of the latest pictures of Coral Reef, including views of the interior and exterior, the waterslides, the changing village and bar area/servery.

Members received answers to questions on details, noted offers to be made to spectators attending, and requested that more photographs be shown on the Facebook page. The Panel thanked officers for the interesting update.

173. Cemetery and Crematorium Update

The Director of Environment, Culture and Communities gave a progress report to the Panel regarding the Cemetery and Crematorium extensions and improvements.

The creation of an additional 34 car parking spaces at the Crematorium had been completed but the construction of a second chapel, the main component of this £1.3m project, had been subject to delay. Completion was now expected by the end of February 2018, some three months later than the original planned completion date in November 2017. Negotiations with the contractor about the delay were ongoing.

As a result, a revenue budget pressure of £175,000 had arisen since there would be little or no fee income accruing from the second chapel in this financial year (as well as some disruption to the number of services held at the existing chapel through the ongoing construction work).

174. 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).

Particular reference was made to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which had been completed and published. Further research was now required, including 'land availability' work, to allocate sites to meet the needs of the Borough to 2036. The preparation of the draft Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was nearing completion prior to public consultation.

Following completion of the analysis of responses to the Issues and Options consultation, the Draft Plan consultation was now likely to take place in November/December 2017, two months later than originally planned. The Joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan had proceeded to the stage where the Issues and Options consultation had concluded and work was moving towards publication of a draft Plan in 2018.

175. Working Group Update Report

The Panel received a report setting out the progress of the Working Group reviewing houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). The Lead Member indicated that quite a lot more work needed to be done on this very interesting review.

176. 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 first quarter of 2017/18 (April to June 2017) relating to Environment, Culture and Communities. The report highlighted exceptional performance, remedial action being taken against under performance, changes in risk, customer feedback, staff data and financial information.

The Director of Environment, Culture and Communities highlighted a number of items from the report and presented an overview of the first quarter performance. He reported the major variances on the revenue budget so far, including reduced income

of £175k at the Cemetery and Crematorium due to the delay in the construction works, contingency funding of £450k to be requested for the Coral Reef closure and £200k for reduced income from Surrey Heath for SANGS capacity at Shepherds Meadow. However, there were offsetting variances amounting to a £90k projected increase in income from the catering function at The Lookout, £191k for a reduction in charges for the HWRC due to reduced tonnage arising from restriction of non-residents, and £100k for increased income due to changes in sales and marketing processes at Bracknell Leisure Centre. Overall, the Department was within budget at this early stage of the year.

Capital budget spending was on track, subject to a carry forward of £2.74m for the Martins Heron roundabout. The staffing position remained satisfactory with vacancies currently at a slightly high but manageable level and continuing low rates of sickness.

Among other highlights in the presentation, the Director commented particularly on the completion of the key improvements to the town centre transport network and public realm works in a timely manner. The intensive recruitment programme for the refurbished Coral Reef had been very successful with all vacant posts filled. The transformation reviews were proceeding satisfactorily, with the Leisure, Libraries and South Hill Park at the implementation phase and Parks and Countryside and Planning and Building Control at the analyse phase.

Arising from questions and discussion, the following points were made:

- Following the town centre opening, street parking in a number of the surrounding uncontrolled parking areas was creating some problems. It was noted that there was scope for reviewing and extending residents parking schemes but the view being taken was that the effect of the new town centre on parking patterns needed time to settle down before any decisions were taken.
- Recruitment of volunteers at libraries had been very successful at some, but the response varied across the Borough. The priority was to ensure that both volunteers and permanent library staff felt properly supported as the programme was rolled out. It was suggested that more attention could be directed towards attracting students and young people to volunteering opportunities with the Council.
- Good progress was reported in reducing the contamination of recycling bins. Further improvements to the Council's recycling schemes were proposed in the coming months. Members expressed an interest in seeing the current ward by ward figures on recycling.

177. **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