

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
6 JANUARY 2021
6.32 - 8.38 PM**



Present:

Councillors Angell (Chairman), Virgo (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch, Brossard, Gbadebo, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Mrs Mattick, Porter, Temperton and Tullett
Parent Governor representatives: Mark Glanville and Tracey Wright

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Mossom

Executive Members Present:

Councillor Hayes, Executive Member for the Environment
Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance

Also Present:

Councillors Brown, Mrs Gaw, Ingham, McKenzie and Leake

In attendance:

Timothy Wheadon, Chief Executive, Bracknell Forest Council
Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery, Bracknell Forest Council
Ann Moore, Head of Democratic and Registration Services
Gareth Jones, Shared Services Manager

54. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 2 December 2020 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chair.

55. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest made.

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

56. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

57. Public Participation

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

58. Council Plan Overview Report

The Chief Executive of Bracknell Forest Council, Timothy Wheadon, introduced the Council Plan Overview Report (CPOR) covering the second quarter of 2020/21.

The following questions were asked and answers given by the Chief Executive:

- Councillors queried the scheduling of Overview & Scrutiny meetings and stated they would like more up to date data. They were informed the sequence of Overview and Scrutiny meetings had been set according to the agreed sequence of data at meetings for approval. Councillors also received two weekly briefings currently due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- In relation to a query about which services had been impacted the most due to the second lockdown the Chief Executive informed Councillors most services had been impacted including libraries, which now offered appointments or click and collect service only; schools remaining closed except to those children listed in the Department of Education guidance including vulnerable children and children of key workers; and the closure of leisure centres. A number of major projects had also been postponed, such as the conversations approach in social care; the integration of health and social care project and any work which detracted from officers in social care and health prioritising residents' health and wellbeing at this current time. Councillors challenged delays to their work programme but agreed front-line staff should not be distracted from their work. This was discussed further during Item 8) Work Programme Update.
- Councillors queried if there was additional funding for the voluntary sector and were informed the budget had already been set for next year.
- Councillors asked why the draft Homelessness Strategy on page 22 of the CPOR was RAG rated amber and were informed work on the strategy had been delayed as those officers were focussed on ensuring rough sleepers were protected during the pandemic.
- Councillors asked how the Council reassured itself of customer satisfaction levels for smokers trying to quit and were informed a sample of residents were chosen to conduct customer satisfaction audits.
- Councillors offered their thanks to officers for working hard to ensure as much as possible remained on track during this difficult period.

59. **Climate Change follow up**

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission continued their climate change review activity, taking the role of a scrutiny panel for this review work, and reflected on their findings to date from their research and the meetings held on 10 March and 2 December 2020.

These were that:

- there was a need for a dedicated cross-party councillor team to progress climate change issues in the Borough;
- Parish and Town Councils were also working on this issue and would have ideas to contribute. Their involvement would lead to a more cohesive plan for how to tackle climate change across the Borough;
- O&S Commission members would like to be consulted upon about the membership of the steering group;
- there should be opportunities to expand the group, once established, to involve external partners and relevant experts.

Recommendations to the Executive:

- 1) That the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan be supported.**
- 2) That a climate change steering group be formed, to include non-Executive members and cross-party representation, and report regularly to the Commission.**

Councillors thanked those who had been involved in scrutiny work on climate change last year, officers and Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery, particularly during the pandemic.

60. **Work Programme Update**

Panel Chairs provided an update on their Panel activity.

Chair of the Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Mrs Birch, requested the final Apprenticeships Review report be brought to the March Overview and Scrutiny Commission meeting due to a delay in analysing the survey results and timescales being affected by the Christmas period.

Chair of the Environment and Communities Panel, Councillor Porter, also requested his final report into Registered Social Landlords Review be delayed to the April Overview and Scrutiny Commission meeting rather than March as members of the Panel wanted to meet with another key witness before finalising their recommendations.

Chair of the Wellbeing and Finance Panel, Councillor Tullett, explained he had recently been informed that officers within Adult Social Care and Public Health were unable to take part in the Social Isolation and Loneliness review at this time due to the impact of the pandemic on these services. It was agreed the Panel would request Bobby Mulheir, Assistant Director: Customer Experience, Digital and ICT to give evidence instead to enable members the Panel to continue with this piece of work in the interim.

The Commission agreed that:

- i) the submission date for the Apprenticeship review be amended to March;
- ii) the submission date for the Registered Social Landlords review be amended to April;
- iii) and the continuation of the Social Isolation and Loneliness review be supported with revised witnesses.

Councillors were invited to suggest items for the Commission work plan for next year and suggestions included:

- Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people
- Mental Health
- Impact of the pandemic on Residential Care Homes

CHAIRMAN