

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
PANEL
09 MARCH 2010
7.30 - 8.55 PM**



Present:

Councillors Finnie (Chairman), McLean (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Barnard, Beadsley, Finch, Mrs Fleming, Leake and Mrs McCracken

Executive Members:

Councillors Mrs Ballin, Mrs Hayes and McCracken

Also Present:

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Scrutiny)
Janet Dowlman, Head of Environmental Services
Mark Devon, Chief Officer: Leisure & Culture
Jane Eaton, Chief Performance & Resources Officer
Simon Hendey, Chief Officer: Housing
Bev Hindle, Chief Officer: Planning & Transport
Steve Loudoun, Chief Officer: Environment & Public Protection
Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture & Communities
Emma Silverton, Overview & Scrutiny Officer

50. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 12 January 2010 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

Matter Arising

Although there had been discussions with Parish and Town Councils concerning dog control, the Council decision on 03 March 2010 had been to make the post of Dog Warden redundant from 01 April 2010.

51. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Mrs Barnard declared a personal interest as the spouse of the Executive member for Children and Young People.

Councillor Mrs McCracken declared a personal interest as the spouse of the Executive member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection and the Chairman of the Cultural Partnership.

52. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

53. Performance Monitoring Report

The Director of Environment, Culture and Communities gave a presentation in

respect of departmental performance with reference to the Performance Monitoring Report (PMR) for the 3rd quarter of 2009/10 ending 31 December 2009. The presentation outlined the Department's revenue and finances at January 2010. Staffing issues, key highlights and the forward look were also included.

The Department had been working hard to identify additional economies in 2009/10 to balance the budget and offset pressures caused by the recession and severe weather events. It was predicted that the Environment, Culture and Communities Department would not exceed their budget for 2009/10.

The Panel noted that there was a £2,000 change in the Gross Revenue Budget. The Net Revenue Budget was £35,939,000 with major variances totalling £126,000 which included; a fee generated from film recording at the Look Out, reduced income from Easthampstead Park Conference Centre, in years savings from the Libraries Book Fund and a smaller than anticipated spend on Landfill Tax.

Capital Finance as at January 2010 was £11,863.10, with an anticipated spend of 64.03%. It was reported that London Road dualling was completed 6 weeks ahead of schedule and under budget by £160,000, contributing to an underspend of 2.55%. Capital schemes identified for carry forwards included:

- South Hill Park Grounds Restoration Project
- Three legged Cross Junction Improvement
- Help to Buy a Home Schemes
- Bracknell Leisure Centre Roundabout Capacity Improvements
- Disabled Facilities Grant
- Resurfacing Highway

The average vacancy factor for the Department was 10.60% which was lower than the previous levels for the same period and reflected stability in the Department. The number of Full Time Equivalent's on sick leave was lower for the quarter than for the same period in 2008, reflecting active management of staff sickness.

It was reported that 'Sport, Leisure and Culture' were sited most often in the Neighbourhood Consultation Survey 2009, as what residents liked best about living in the area. This was followed by 'Access to Nature' and 'Parks and Countryside'.

The Director highlighted key areas in the Department's forward look. It was noted that the Cultural Services Section were using an Improvement Toolkit which would be externally assessed to identify any improvements that could be made. An additional £200,000 had been allocated for highway repairs. Consultation of the Site Allocation Development Plan was underway. This was an important document that would define the shape of the borough for the next 10 years.

Arising from Members' questions and comments the following points were noted:

- Issues investigated by Trading Standards included fake England football shirts.
- The reduction in residents sending waste to landfill should be highlighted to encourage residents to continue reducing waste.
- Registered Social Landlords were looking to provide rented accommodation at 80% of the open market rent to diversify tenure on new developments. This would allow tenants to access mortgages with more ease in the future and would not result in implications for the Council.

- It was planned to allow BFC, My Choice card holders to pay council debt via the PayZone using their e+ card. This was being implemented to replace the swipe card provided by Bracknell Forest Homes which was previously used by tenants of temporary accommodation to pay council debt.
- Although they did not win, the e+ Smartcard Team were pleased to be nominated for an award in the e-Government National Awards.
- Section 106 funding used to part fund Whitegrove Library refurbishments had been allocated before new procedures were put in place to consult with Ward Members on the allocation of Section 106 monies.
- The Car Park Management Contract evaluation to be reported to the Executive in March 2010 was a possible missed opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny to input on a decision before it was taken by the Executive. It was agreed that raising areas for scrutiny input needed to be identified at an earlier stage if possible.
- The number of Lektrievers, which were large metal filing systems, was to be reduced in Time Square.
- Details of the outcome of the investigations in to food poisoning cases linked to local takeaway premises was requested by Councillor Beadsley.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Housing and Council Tax Benefit Working Group would have an opportunity to look at the work of the Benefits Customer Focus Group held on 26 November 2009 at their next meeting due to be held in April 2010.
- The Department had received 40 Freedom of Information requests during the quarter which were processed by the relevant officers and could take up a large amount of resources to fulfil. It was requested that members be provided with further information regarding Freedom of Information requests made to the Council. It was suggested that this may be a matter for the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

The Panel congratulated officers and the Director on their successful management of the Department's performance and budget in the third quarter, particularly for the extra work undertaken to provide services during the severe weather.

54. **Waste Satisfaction Survey**

The Panel received a presentation from Janet Dowlman, Head of Environmental Services in respect of the results of the Bracknell Forest Waste Satisfaction Survey and Waste Collection Analysis by the re3 waste disposal partnership.

A Waste Satisfaction Survey was undertaken in November 2009 in response to the poor waste satisfaction results of the Place Survey 2008 to help the department obtain a clear understanding of residents' perceptions and to identify key areas of dissatisfaction and any barriers to recycling.

It was thought that the reasons for the poor results were; that Longshot Lane was closed, it had only been 2 years since refuse collection had changed from weekly to fortnightly and separate boxes were used for paper and card.

Improvements that had taken place since the Place Survey in 2008 included; Comingled collections of Kerbside recyclables from December 2008, the redeveloped Longshot Lane facility fully opened from July 2009 and improvements to recycling bring sites.

Key results from the survey and comparisons with the 2008 survey were:

- From 3,500 surveys issued in both cases, there was a response rate of 47% in 2008 compared with 46% in 2009.
- Overall satisfaction with refuse collection had increased from 55% to 70%.
- The perception the refuse collection had got worse over the last 3 years had fallen from 47% to 23%.
- 91% of respondents used the Council's kerbside collection to recycle, with 82% satisfied with the service.
- 62% thought Longshot Lane had improved over the last 3 years.
- 49% thought recycling sites had improved over the last 3 years.
- 28% thought garden waste collection had improved with 42% indicating it had stayed the same.

Conclusions drawn from the survey were that overall levels of recycling in Bracknell Forest were good with kerbside recycling having a high level of satisfaction. Further information about specific items that could or could not be recycled was needed as results showed respondent satisfaction and participation was linked with information available. There was greater satisfaction with refuse collection than in 2008.

A joint Waste Analysis was undertaken in October / November 2009 with re3 partners using MEL research to analyse residual waste for recyclables, contamination of kerbside recycling, bags of waste taken to Longshot Lane, street sweepings and litter bin waste.

Acorn Groups were used to compare the waste analysis with the socio demographics in the borough. Key trends highlighted from the analysis included:

- There was a high level of garden waste in residual bins, particularly in Acorn 1 – wealthy achievers.
- There was a high level of paper and cardboard in residual bins, particularly in Acorn 5 – hard pressed.
- There was a high level of contaminated glass in recycling containers particularly in Acorn groups 3 – comfortably off, and 4 – moderate means.
- The waste generated across all groups had dropped by 7.4% between 2007/08 and 2008/09 and was predicted to drop again for 2009/10.

Analysis of street sweepings and litter bins showed that 36% of litter bin waste was recyclable and 87% of street sweepings were recyclable. With 2.5 tonnes of street sweepings collected annually, developing a process to recycle this waste would reduce landfill tax paid by the Council.

As a result of the two surveys the department would be targeting the poor performing areas, working with re3 on joint initiatives such as leaflets and posters explaining which recyclables should go in which containers. Local focus would be on Crown Wood and Great Hollands, with community groups and schools being used to raise awareness.

Arising from the subsequent discussion the follow points were noted:

- Only certain types of plastic could be recycled. The majority of plastic bottles could be recycled however plastic tubs could not currently be recycled. It was noted that the lids from bottles needed to be removed however the plastic ring could be left in place.
- It was not known if the large level of paper and card found in the residual waste bins was contaminated by plastic or another non-recyclable material, and therefore could not be recycled.

- Further investigation of the survey data was required to identify specific areas of recycling that groups were having difficulty understanding.
- The Council were not intending to chip refuse or recycling bins in Bracknell Forest.
- Dual purpose recycling bins were to be installed in the town centre, neighbourhood shops and the train station to increase recycling of public litter.
- It was reported that further details of Acorn Groups may be available through the 'Up My Street' website. Further to a question concerning the validity of the Acorn assessment to Ward level, the Panel was advised that officers had a related report from the Acorn Group and there was a general report in respect of the entire country.
- It was reported that many European countries were ahead of the UK in their commitment to recycling as they had focused on waste from an earlier stage. A relatively recent increase in funding and targets for recycling in the UK had meant a shift in focus towards recycling in local authorities.
- It was suggested that it was possible to recycle some contaminants, which was being trialed in some parts of the country. Councillor Leake referred to a newspaper article relating to the recycling of contaminated materials.
- It was noted that there was emerging technology to increase recycling capacity however much of this still needed testing and was currently very expensive.
- The council was working towards encouraging manufacturers to produce recyclable containers to make it easier for the public to understand what could be recycled.

The Panel thanked the Head of Environmental Services for her presentation and congratulated the team for their achievements so far.

55. Working Groups Update

The Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel noted the Working Groups Update Report.

56. Indicative Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2010/11

The Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel agreed its indicative work programme for 2010/11, attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

57. Overview and Scrutiny Quarterly Progress Report

The Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel noted the Overview and scrutiny activity over the period November 2009 to January 2010, set out in the Overview and Scrutiny - Quarterly Progress Report.

The Panel noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Severe Weather Working Group was not included in the list of current working groups as the report had been finalised before this group was established.

58. Executive Forward Plan

The Executive Forward Plan items relating to Environment, Culture and Communities were noted.

It was noted that public consultation for the Private Sector Housing Strategy would include an article in Town & Country, a report to the Strategic Housing Partnership and the landlord Letting Agent Forum. The Strategy was being developed to shape

how the Council provided advice for, and support to, the private housing sector in the borough.

CHAIRMAN