

Foreword from the Leader and Chief Executive

This report provides a brief summary of your Council's achievements over the last year and its ambitions for the year to come. It reflects the hard work which goes on across the organisation each year to realise our long-term vision for the Borough: to make Bracknell Forest a place where all people can thrive – living, learning and working in a clean, safe and healthy environment.

Budget pressures

Like the rest of the public sector, the Council faces an unprecedented financial challenge in the years to come as the country recovers from a deep recession and the credit crunch. The Coalition Government has made tackling the financial deficit a key priority and has already initiated a range of measures to reduce public expenditure. In his Budget speech on 22 June, the Chancellor indicated that councils should expect real term cuts of 25% or more over the next 4 years. The details, however, will not be available until later this year following the completion of the Comprehensive Spending Review. We are not complacent and have already started to think about how we might respond to these pressures. Our priority will be to protect, as far as possible, those services that our residents value. We are confident that our track record of delivering high quality services within budget places us in the best possible position to succeed.

How your council works

Bracknell Forest Council is made up of 42 councillors elected to represent 18 wards. There are 39 Conservative, and 3 Labour, councillors. Strategic leadership of the Council is provided by a smaller group of councillors, the Executive, responsible for taking the major decisions which determine the council's overall direction. The day-to-day running of council is the responsibility of the Corporate Management Team, led by the Chief Executive.

Bracknell Forest is a unitary authority, which means that we have responsibility for all the services provided by local government in the borough. In order to achieve the best possible services for our residents at the lowest cost, we work closely with other local agencies such as the police, fire service, health providers, voluntary organisations and private businesses.

In 2008, the Council set out 6 priorities:

- A town centre fit for the 21st century
- Protecting and enhancing our environment
- Promoting health and achievement
- Creating a borough where people are safe and feel safe
- Value for money
- Sustaining economic prosperity

Each priority is supported by one or more medium-term objectives. The following pages explain the progress we've made and look at what we hope to achieve in the year ahead.

At the back of this document, we summarise the tremendous progress we have made in delivering on the plans we set out in 2007.

We take immense pride in the services we provide and look forward to continuing to support our residents in the coming year.



Paul Bettise

Leader of the Council



Timothy Wheeler

Chief Executive

Objective 1: Build a vibrant Bracknell town centre that residents are proud of

The design of Bracknell town centre reflects its origins as one of the first post-war “New Towns” around London. Local residents, business and retailers have been clear with us that the town centre needs to be transformed urgently. We are working hard with the major landowners, including the Bracknell Regeneration Partnership, to build a town centre fit for the 21st century, based on what local people have told us they would like to see. The economic downturn has made this a difficult task, in common with major construction projects across the UK and beyond. Nevertheless, Bracknell Forest Council has made real progress in delivering or assisting with the development of key new buildings in and around the town centre. Bracknell Forest Council are doing all we can to deliver new shops and other facilities as soon as economic conditions allow.

Achievements for 2009/10

- A brand new forecourt at Bracknell railway station.
- The construction of the new Garth Hill College (opened in September 2010).

Achievements for 2010/11 and beyond

- 29 affordable homes on the periphery (Q3)
- The coming year will see the next key steps in the regeneration programme, including assembling the remaining land needed for development (through Compulsory Purchase Order processes), and improvements to the town’s physical environment.
- We will continue to develop our strategies for economic development and regeneration.

Objective 2: Keep our parks, open spaces and leisure facilities accessible and attractive

The provision of good-quality parks and leisure facilities is consistently ranked highly by our residents on the list of things that make Bracknell Forest a great place to live. We run a number of major facilities, including Bracknell Leisure Centre, Coral Reef pool and the Look Out Discovery Centre. These are very popular with local residents and are an important source of income to the council, helping us to keep council tax low. We are also responsible for the maintenance and conservation of around 150 parks and countryside sites. .

Achievements in 2009/10

11 new enhanced play spaces have been delivered through the Playbuilder Project. The sites are:

- Ascot Jubilee, North Ascot
- East Lodge, Great Hollands
- Evenlode Way, Sandhurst
- Farley Wood, Binfield
- Goddard Way, Warfield
- Latimer/Lydney, Birch Hill/Hanworth
- Memorial Recreation Ground, Sandhurst
- Morgan Recreation Ground, Crowthorne
- Pollardrow Avenue, Priestwood

- Threshfields, Wildridings
- Winscombe, Great Hollands



- Design work is now complete, and planning, and listed building consent secured to restore the historic parkland at South Hill Park. This has been made possible following an award of £2.3m grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund Parks for People Programme.
- Following the award of Heritage Lottery Fund Breathing Places, funding to Bracknell Forest Natural History Society and Sandhurst Town Council, local community groups have worked jointly with Bracknell Forest Council to improve recreation and wildlife value at Berrybank Copse and Scott's Hill.
- We secured Green Flag Awards for Popes Meadow, Lily Hill and Shepherd Meadows (jointly with Sandhurst Council and the Memorial Park).

Case Study

South Hill Park is a Grade II Listed historic park centred around a 19th century mansion house on the edge of Bracknell town centre. The park is set to receive a multi-million pound renovation following a successful Heritage Lottery Fund Grant bid by Bracknell Forest Council. In April 2008 the Parks and Countryside service was awarded £209,000 funding for a year's design and development from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund's National Parks for People programme. We have been consulting with residents and park users during the design process. Project partners include South Hill Park Art Centre, Bracknell Town Council and Thames Water.

In March 2009, a stage two bid for a further £2.3m for works to the site was submitted and subsequently approved, bringing the project's total investment to £4.4m and enabling 18 months of restoration works on-site and then 10 years of on-going maintenance. Major planned work includes restoring the terrace garden, including creating new disabled access; clearing silt from the southern lake; and scrub management within the woodland areas. New paths and access points will be created and a more welcoming park entrance from the car park will be developed. Information for visitors around the park is also to be improved. Smaller planned projects include wildlife habitat improvements, better facilities for young people and new landscaped features. A project manager has been appointed who is overseeing the work and a 'Friends Of' group for the park has been established.

Work started on-site in the summer of 2010

Case Study

The Play Ranger service was officially launched in July 2009. 2 play rangers were recruited for 30 hours per week all year round. The service offers children and young people opportunities for free play using minimal equipment while making maximum use of the natural environment.

The play rangers provide the following services:

- Mixed sessions in public parks and green spaces in the school holiday periods

and during term time:

- Under 5 sessions linked to Children's Centres during school time
- Under 10's and Over 10's sessions in public parks and green spaces after school
- Visits to schools during lunch time periods and
- an active presence at events such as National Play Day

The main aims for the play ranger service are to:

- Encourage children and parents to make use of the parks and local green spaces, in all weathers.
- Bring together local communities, children extending their friendship groups and guardians being able to meet others.
- Set a high standard for our sessions, making sure the service is well organised and children enjoyed themselves.
- Promote our service not only for the summer but as a year round venture.
- Provide an inclusive service, accessible for everyone.
- Have 300 children registered via the Ranger Fun Card and 500 children attend actual sessions over the summer holiday period between 27 July and 28 August.

The Play Ranger Fun Card is an innovative scheme which was developed exclusively for by Bracknell Forest Council to assess and monitor the effectiveness of the service and how it meets the needs of the local children. The system also allows the identification of groups of children who are less likely to attend so that those pockets can be targeted with specific activities. An important aspect of this system is that fun cards are entirely optional, and children are welcome at any of the play sessions without taking part in the process. By the end of September a total of 752 cards were issued and 1167 session participants were recorded.

Just some of the activities available during the summer are listed below

Making poi – Using tights and tennis balls, this activity was originally run at National play day, but worked really well for launching tennis balls into the air as high as possible.



Bandages – The Play Rangers took out a box of old bandages; children enjoyed wrapping themselves and others up and pretending they had hurt themselves. At one session, the children used the bandages, tights and some bin bags to make costumes.

Scrap modelling – Children made whatever they wanted using cardboard boxes and other scrap items. Most made robots – one group made a coffin! One session had the under 5's using tennis balls and a large cardboard tube - they spent most of the session running the balls down the tube collecting them at the bottom, then taking them back up the hill to start again.



Man hunt – Children went into the woods with play rangers and played tag type games, these games were much easier to play with older children, but the younger children and parents really enjoyed being involved.

Den building – Children were given tarpaulin, bungees and tent pegs and then were given the opportunity to build dens, after the children had made the dens, games were played inside their dens.

Face painting – The Play Rangers took face paints and mirrors out to the parks and gave children the chance to paint their own faces. They also really enjoyed painting their parents and the play ranger's faces.

Painting pebbles – Children went into the woods and collected natural products and then painted their pebbles anyway they wanted. Children also got excited about putting pebbles that had already been painted back into the woods.

Treasure hunt – The Play Rangers hid bean bags and other items in a wooded area: children were sent on a treasure hunt in the ‘Ranger Jungle’ where they had to cross a ‘shark infested river’ to gain access - such a simple game which children wanted to play over and over again.

Scoobies – A craft activity which involved tying plastic strings together to make pretty patterns, this was particularly enjoyed by the mid age range children and parents!

Nerf rockets – These rockets make a whistling sound when thrown fast enough; children had so much fun throwing these and creating different games.

Achievements for 2010/11 and beyond

- It is hoped that a waterspray area can be developed on Locks Ride and that an inclusive play area can be developed at the Look Out through the playbuilder project.

Objective 3: Promote sustainable housing and infrastructure development

The nationwide housing shortage means that all local areas are under pressure to construct more homes. It is vital that this construction is managed so as to minimise its impact on the environment, as well as to ensure that local public services such as schools and transport facilities keep pace with the growing population. High property values in the south-east of England mean that it can be hard for people on average incomes to find somewhere decent to live, so improving the supply of high-quality affordable housing is also important.

Achievements for 2010

- Despite adverse economic conditions, 325 additional homes were completed in Bracknell Forest during 2009-2010. This figure includes 153 affordable homes.
- HomeBuy, a low cost home ownership initiative has been used at Jennets Park, The Parks and Wykery Copse.
- We launched “BFC my choice”, a choice based letting scheme. www.bfcmychoice.org.uk
- The cash incentive scheme has been created to help residents buy a home.
- 4 Registered Social Landlords (RSL) have been appointed as the preferred partners for affordable housing development for the next 3 years.
- By the end of March 2010, 324 homes had been completed at The Parks, together with on and off site highway improvements. The developer has also contributed towards improvements made to the forecourt at Bracknell Railway Station and discussions have taken place about the provision of a community centre/pavilion on-site
- By the end of March 2010, 452 homes had been completed at Jennetts Park. On and off site highway improvements and play areas have been completed and work is underway on providing a country park for use by the community. Discussions have also taken place on the delivery of a local centre, with planning permission for the community centre granted and a planning application for the primary school received in May 2010 with a view to it opening in September 2011.

Case Study

Choice Based Lettings and Housing Allocation Policy Review Consultation

The issue:

In 2008 we considered making changes to the way in which Housing Association homes were allocated and wanted to know what applicants' views were on the proposed changes.

What we did:

The target population for consultation was the 4,200 applicants on the Housing Register. In September 2008, two levels of consultation were carried out:

- An invitation to take part in focus group discussions was sent to all applicants
- A questionnaire asking about the types of changes applicants would like made to the way properties are allocated was also circulated.

Consultation was via letters and questionnaires, feedback forms and focus groups. Officers also consulted with the Tenants and Leaseholders Panel from Bracknell Forest Homes (the voluntary transfer RSL). Focus groups included applicants from each of the main applicant types. Attendance at the focus groups varied from 8 to 2 households.

Outcome:

The results of the consultation undertaken in September 2008 were summarised in a newsletter to applicants and the results of the first stage consultation were used to inform the revised Allocations Policy.

As a result of feedback from applicants, the following changes were made:

- Applicants said they found the current points system difficult to understand and that a system based on bands would be preferred. The new Allocations Policy is a banding based policy.
- Applicants said priority should be given to Bracknell Forest residents. The new policy prioritises applicants within the same band based on living in the Borough.
- Applicants said the vacant properties should be advertised on the internet. A new computer system is being implemented which will allow this.
- Applicants said they wanted to be able to bid for properties by phone and on the internet.

Taking forward:

We are just about to embark on the first year review of the allocation policy and will be carrying out further consultation with applicants on proposed changes. We carried out telephone surveys throughout early June 2010.

Achievements for 2010/11 and beyond

- A review of the housing strategy programmes will be undertaken and the establishment of an equity share scheme.
- Implementation of local authority mortgages for low cost home ownership.
- 125 affordable houses are planned to be completed
- Aim to help 5 households buy a home with the help provided by a cash incentive scheme grant.

Launch of a New Partnership to Deliver Affordable Housing

In 2009 expressions of interest were invited from Registered Social Landlords (RSL) wishing to be a Preferred Partner within Bracknell Forest. Submissions were assessed against stringent criteria including quality of the housing product and financial robustness. As a result, 4 organisations were selected to be partners including 2 which are combined development partners.

The partnership will be governed by a protocol which focuses on the delivery of new affordable housing in Bracknell Forest for a 3 year period and to ensure that partners contribute to the strategic aims of the Council.

Objective 4: Keep Bracknell Forest clean and green

In surveys, Bracknell Forest residents have told us that clean, litter-free streets contribute a great deal to the local quality of life, so this has been made a top priority. We are also committed to improving the environmental impact of our services, resulting in the local authority having some of the highest recycling rates in the country. The landscaping teams work hard to keep local green spaces looking good all year round.

Achievements for 2009/10

- We adopted the Bracknell Forest Carbon Management Plan in June 2009 with a target to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from council operations of 25% by 2012 against a 2007 baseline.
- We have undertaken energy surveys at all its buildings and are actively looking at means to improve their energy efficiency e.g. with insulation.
- We carried out a comprehensive survey of one building with a view to alternative energy sourcing e.g. geo-thermal power, photovoltaic cells and rain water harvesting.
- Snaprails Park was part of the High Sheriff of Berkshire's litter campaign week.
- A project has been created to establish the carbon offset value of Sandhurst Memorial Park and Shepherd Meadows.
- Two schools were assisted to apply for interest free funding from the Salix Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme. Edgbarrow School received £8,000 for improved boiler and zone controls and Wildridings School received £12,500 for lighting controls, a pool cover, a new heating controller and improved roof insulation.
- The Climate Change Partnership was presented with a silver award in the Place category of the Bracknell Forest Partnerships Awards 2009 for making home energy monitors available at all libraries for loan to residents – provision year end energy data shows an 8% reduction of energy consumption and a 6% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from council properties, excluding schools.

Achievements for 2010/11 and beyond

- A refresh of the Council's Climate Change Action plan from April 2010 will be developed.
- We aim to register for the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) Energy Efficiency Scheme by September 2010; this will result in installation of automatic meter readers (AMRs) and it aims to achieve the Carbon Trust Standard by March 2011.
- Working with Climate Berkshire, we will implement project LoCUS (Low carbon understanding for small and medium enterprises) in the borough.
- Develop a Surface Water Management Plan for Bracknell Forest.
- Apply for Invest-to-Save funds to implement Carbon Management Plan projects.

Objective 5: Improve health and wellbeing within the borough

We play a major role in improving health and wellbeing in the area, working closely with partners. This ranges from promoting high standards of hygiene in local catering businesses to supporting young people to minimise the harmful effects of drug and alcohol misuse. We know that access to high-quality health facilities is important to local people. This is why we are working hard to support our partners in delivering a local, "Healthspace", a major new facility for the borough designed to provide a better integrated range of health services, together with a new renal and cancer centre at Brant's Bridge, Bracknell, where construction is well under way.

Achievements for 2009/10

- The Council's Dementia Team won the "Skills for Care" Accolades Award which further determined our approach to modernising in house services.
- The Learning Disability Team was recognised nationally as one of three finalists in the Dignity in Care category of the Department of Health's Annual Health and Social Care Awards
- A range of commissioning strategies for all of the major care groups has been developed. Residents requiring support, their carers and relevant staff groups were central to the commissioning process and the evaluation of the services that are provided.
- Secondary schools in Bracknell Forest took part in the Health Achievement Awards competition. Pupils were asked to give a presentation on a health topic using creative means: such as dance, rap, film, comedy sketch, and we are encouraged to promote their message to schools, families and the wider community. The final was held in July at Eton Dorney Rowing Lake.

Achievements for 2010 and beyond

- The process of modernisation of our services continues. This includes a consultation on the future of Downside Resource Centre, the expansion of dementia-specific day support and the creation of a local care economy, along with plans to redesign Carers Support Services for adults with a learning disability.
- We will implement new commissioning arrangements for people with a learning disability to increase the number of people helped to live in non-residential settings.
- We are actively involved in the development of the Bracknell Healthspace with NHS Berkshire East to ensure that health needs of residents are met more effectively.
- We will work with health partners as they reconfigure services in the light of the expected financial situation.

Objective 6: Improve outcomes for children and families

Our services for children range from those which are aimed at all 30,000 young people in the borough, to those which involve urgent intervention in acute crisis situations. The approach is governed by the national, "Every Child Matters" programme and by the Council's Children's and Young People's Plan.

Achievements for 2009/10

- The national campaign "Change4life," has begun and is already influencing people to eat less and be more active, with the aim of living longer. The materials are also being

offered via the “Healthy Schools Programme”.

- The Family Nurse Partnership Programme has helped to support young first time mothers from early pregnancy up to the age of 2 years. The primary focus is the future health and well-being of the child and mother, but other benefits can include a reduction in smoking during pregnancy, longer intervals between pregnancies with fewer unplanned subsequent births, better language development and greater involvement of fathers.
- We updated our programme of free support for parents and carers. Support is available to all parents and aims to address common parenting needs. 13 sessions were available in 2009-10. Programmes of parenting support to tackle more complex needs were also offered, with a new programme, “Strengthening Families” introduced during the year, aimed at families with children aged 10 to 14.
- 15 adults have achieved Level 1 literacy/numeracy accreditation and 35 have achieved Level 2 accreditation through our programme of family literacy, language and numeracy courses at the Open Learning Centre.
- The Family Intervention Project began offering to 6 families in the borough, aiming to help them with intensive support.
- The Community Activities and Services Strategy were published, which will lead to the further development of area-based work that benefits children, young people and families in all Bracknell Forest communities. Partnership working was refreshed to ensure that we work with other agencies to deliver our plans effectively. Schemes were funded across the borough to meet local needs, including the Summer of Fun in Sandhurst, holiday activities in Crowthorne and a Junior Citizen’s Day in South Bracknell.

Achievements for 2010/11 and beyond

- An Activity Bursary scheme will enable children from economically disadvantaged families to participate in a range of high quality leisure and recreational opportunities usually enjoyed by children from wealthier homes. The aim is to improve their confidence and self-esteem so that they attend, and achieve more at school.
- The Family Intervention Project will increase its capacity to meet the needs of 15 families.
- “Think Family” developments will ensure that services work together better to meet the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged families.
- Schools will be supported to develop sustainable extended services.
- Community cohesion will benefit from a variety of schemes designed to meet local needs including language support.

Case study (Council)

Age to Age – Storytelling and Singing Workshops

Age to Age is a music and reminiscence project conceived by local folk musician Roger Watson. The project is split into three stages.

Stage one involved creating an opportunity for elderly people to tell their stories to each other. This involved building trust and creating an atmosphere where participants felt they could recall their memories and felt happy to have these recorded. In each setting, council officers worked closely with residential home staff and carers to support the sessions and produce the final performances on site.

From January 2009 to March 2010, the Arts Development team at the council involved elderly people from Ladybank, Downside, Birdsgrove and Edmond Court and Crowthorne

Library Reminiscence Group in working with storyteller and reminiscence worker, Janet Dowling. Many of the participants were aged between 70 and their mid 90s. Janet met with individuals and asked them to tell their own stories about their past. More recently these have been retained as reminiscence recordings which will be available through the heritage pages on the Council's website – www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk

The second stage involved turning these memories into stories, told to pupils from 7 schools in Birch Hill, Harmans Water, Crowthorne and Priestwood and Garth. The aim was to enable children to listen to and appreciate the stories, and create lyrics with the support of Roger Watson. Roger worked with the pupils during their lunch breaks and after school to help the children select stories to turn into songs and lyrics over 6-9 sessions. The songs were performed back to the elderly participants and wider audiences. The performances were widely popular and it also gave pupils and the elderly story givers a chance to meet and enjoy the final results.

Each performance was recorded and copies given to all who participated. There are also plans to create a songbook based on the project. This project was organised in partnership with the Council's extended services.

When we asked the pupils what they enjoyed most they said:

- “speaking to the older people
- going out of school to sing to people
- listening to the stories of people
- singing the songs in front of the Reminiscence Group
- working with other people
- writing my own songs”

Feedback from the last project with elderly people showed us that

- Everyone felt that Janet was friendly and easy to talk to. Janet really got the best out of people during their interviews.
- Everyone enjoyed the concert and could recognise which song was about them.
- Winifred and Iris particularly liked meeting the children and everyone felt the project was a good way for children to learn about life as a child, growing up in the 30s, 40s and 50s.
- Everyone was impressed by the quality of the lyrics and the singing itself

Objective 7: Seek to ensure that every resident feels included and able to access the services they need

We believe that communities are strongest when everyone has the opportunity to participate in society as fully as they wish. We aim to make it as simple as possible for all our residents to access services. Engaging with as many different groups of residents is also very important, because it helps us to ensure that the services we provide are really what residents need and want to use.

Achievements for 2009/10

- The first ever Faith & Belief Conference in Bracknell Forest was held, attended by people from many different faiths and beliefs including Hindu, Muslim, Baha'i and Christian, together with representatives from partner agencies.
- Development of the Partnership Equality Group, to support vulnerable groups and reduce inequalities.
- Funding has been secured for the Bracknell Forest Partnership to work with Disabled GO, a national charity, to improve the access to information about buildings and schools in Bracknell for people with disabilities.
- The Sandhurst "Respect, Responsibility and Rights" community project was launched to promote community cohesion and good relations.
- A new Community Association was established in Jennetts Park; the group are organising a number of community activities to bring the community together.
- The Bullbrook Community Centre has been redeveloped.
- The United Reform Church's "One Church: 100 Uses" group was supported to complete an options appraisal on the redevelopment of the Harmans Water Neighbourhood Centre.
- The new community centres at Jennetts Park are under development.
- We have engaged with the Bracknell Forest Minorities Alliance on ethnic monitoring categories, school governors and planning issues in the borough.
- The Corporate Web Team developed a range of social media services for the Council through Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and YouTube. This has improved our communication with local residents and also reaches sections of the community who do not visit the Council's public website.
- A range of activities have been provided in support of Local Democracy Week including a Youth Question Time with a panel of Councillors and 3 secondary schools as well as Bracknell & Wokingham College. An "Ask the Leader" website event also took place.
- The launching of the Community Development Strategy by Bracknell Forest Homes has provided opportunities for all people in the Borough. This has included openings for young people at the Oakwood Youth Challenge and the chance for them to produce and broadcast their own radio show.
- Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action has reported that there has been a 50% increase in the number of people registering interest in volunteering in 2009-10 compared to 2008-09.
- Bracknell Foodbank was started in September 2009 and over the last year has helped over 800 adults, 300 children and served over 10,000 meals and given over 8 tonnes of food donated by schools, churches, charities, companies and individuals.
- We have worked closely with the Kerith Centre in Bracknell on a range of issues to support our residents.

Achievements in 2010/11 and beyond

- The Bracknell Forest Disabled GO webpage is planned to be launched to improve access to information for people with disabilities.
- A European Integration Fund Bid was developed to support the Ghurkha community with ESOL provision and access to health care.
- A 'Life in the UK' course was launched for the Nepali community incorporating ESOL.
- The Council aim to develop a Bracknell Forest Faith and Belief Forum and further increase understanding of these communities' needs and aspirations.
- "All of Us" Community Cohesion Strategy Action Plan is to be implemented.
- Support the use of culture and sport to give people a chance to meet other members of

- their community and shape their sense of belonging and identity in that community.
- Support communities to participate in the Big Lunch initiative to get to know their neighbours better.
- The corporate web team is overseeing a series of social media business pilots to investigate how service teams can interact directly with local residents, improve their access to services and enable two way communications with harder to reach sections of the community.
- Equality Framework Assessment

Case study (Council)

History of Muslim Juma Prayer at Bracknell Leisure Centre

The situation

There is no mosque in Bracknell Forest, with the nearest being over 20 miles away. The Council, in consultation with the Muslim community, has met this need for a place of worship for Friday Juma prayers through renting a room at the Leisure Centre to the Bracknell Islamic Cultural Society.

What was done

Juma Prayer has been held there for nearly 10 years with steadily increasing numbers. This is an invaluable facility for Muslims, living and working in Bracknell Forest. For the first few years it began with 5 – 10 men attending every week to perform the congregational prayer in a small meeting room. This steadily increased to approximately 30. In the early stages, gym mats covered with sheets were used and then these were enhanced by the donation of pre-printed prayer sheets brought each week by the worshippers.

As word of mouth and publications indicated the existence of the prayer facility, the size of the congregation grew in numbers. They then transferred the regular booking to the multipurpose room which could hold up to 70 – 80 people.

Outcome

Awareness has continued to spread and after another couple of years the regular congregation relocated to the large Forest Suite which is now attended by more than 100 people including a facility for women to attend too.

Muslims originating from more than 30 different countries come to pray and 3 bags of prayer sheets are brought each week to be used.

In addition to the weekly prayers, Bracknell Leisure Centre is hired for celebratory prayers associated with significant religious occasions, such as the end of Ramadan and Pilgrimage.

Taking it forward

The local Muslim community is actively striving to secure a permanent place of worship which can be used for all the 5 prayers throughout each day and has had discussions with Councillor Paul Bettison, Leader of the Council about this.

Objective 8: Reduce crime and increase people's sense of safety in the borough

We have made even more progress in tackling crime this year. The level of crime and anti-social behaviour is regularly ranked as the number one influence on the quality of life in an area. We work closely with Thames Valley Police and other local partners to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. Fear of crime can be nearly as harmful to people's quality of life as actual crime itself, so we also work to ensure that residents' perceptions of how safe they are in the borough do match the overall low rate of crime. Our recording system, CADIS, has been recognised nationally as an example of good practice

What the council achieved in 2009/10

- The numbers of serious acquisitive crimes (burglary to homes, theft of, and from cars and robbery offences) fell during the fourth quarter and at the end of the period are showing a reduction of 18.7%. This represents the lowest level of these types of crime for more than 10 years, against a backdrop of more houses, cars and people living in the borough since 1999.
- Within this basket of crime types there has been particularly strong performance in relation to reducing numbers of theft of motor vehicles (-31%) theft from (-12%) and burglary dwelling (-24%).
- Serious incidents of crime are rare in Bracknell Forest; those that have occurred have been thoroughly investigated and dealt with by the most appropriate team of officers, with all cases being worked on in full partnership with the wider community safety team.
- The roll out of the boroughs automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) system has commenced and plays a key roll in investigating criminals that use the road networks to move around and commit crime.
- Operation Ladybird has brought partners together to tackle the most prolific offenders in terms of both enforcement and intervention.
- Internal figures show that reports of anti-social behaviour (of comparable incidents) decreased by 8.9% this year compared to the previous year.
- The survey commissioned by the Neighbourhood Action Groups attracted a high response rate, providing valuable information for us and our partners about community priorities.
- The top 6 CADIS categories all experienced reductions in the numbers of reports as follows:
 - Dangerous driving - 8.1% reduction
 - Fly-tipping and dumped rubbish - 21.2% reduction (excluding new data sources)
 - Harassment - 10.7% reduction
 - Noise including domestic noise - 0.2% Reduction
 - Road hazard - 20.9% reduction
 - Vandalism - 22.5% Reduction

Achievements for 2010/11 and beyond

- Deliver the Youth Intervention programme – Phoenix which helps young people to build on personal qualities, increase self confidence and encourage positive thinking. Evolution for young offenders, looking at consequential thinking and problem solving skills.
- Thames Valley Police are continuing to work with partners to identify locations where neighbourhood offices can be opened, this has already happened in Birch Hill this year,

to add to Sandhurst and Binfield. An office will open in Easthampstead in the near future.

- Operation Ladybird will be repeated throughout the year to continue the focus on the minority of offenders who commit a majority of crime.
- Improve community consultation and engagement through published 'Have Your Say Meetings' across the Borough.
- The levels of support for families and friends will be increased to include a kinship carers group
- The Domestic Abuse Forum partners are continuing to work to encourage reports of domestic abuse to Police and to Women's Aid, and work with harder to reach groups such as Nepali community and vulnerable adults.

Case study- Bracknell Forest Homes

The Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service has trained Bracknell Forest Homes staff to identify the need for and the benefits of a home fire safety check. Bracknell Forest Homes has included fire safety publicity (including a 'Fire Safety in the Home' booklet) in their new tenants pack.

Case study – e-safety

The creation of the e-safety Exemplar Policy and Guidance 2010 was predominantly Council-led and addressed a gap that was identified in the e-safety audit process which took place in 2009.

The policy sets out a step-by-step guide and flowchart for organisation staff and volunteers to use where there has been an e-safety incident in their area so that it can be managed properly. It also includes templates for Acceptable User Policies (AUPs) for 2 different age groups of children and young people. They contain a set of rules and rights for online safety which can be displayed in settings and discussed with children and young people.

The policy contains an Acceptable User Policy for organisation staff and volunteers which sets out guidelines for their online behaviour, such as to not to give out their personal mobile number or be friends" on Facebook with children and young people in their setting. The documents were launched at the Local safeguarding Children Board Conference in June 2010 and laminated versions of the Acceptable User Policy were widely distributed. A number of schools have also requested further copies for use within classrooms.

Objective 9: Promote independence and choice for vulnerable adults and older people

We support older people to be as independent as possible, with services designed to help people remain in their own homes for as long as they can and as long as they want. We are working towards providing more choice for the vulnerable adults we support, by increasing the number of people who have control of their own social care budgets. We also work in partnership with the voluntary sector and others to provide targeted support for carers.

Achievements for 2009/10

- The Domestic Support Service is supporting more than 210 elderly/frail persons with shopping, cleaning, laundry and pension collecting. The service will also accompany people to do their own shopping if this is the preferred option which enables individuals

to remain independent for as long as possible. 90% of users judged the service as excellent in the annual questionnaire.

- As part of the preventative agenda, we employ a Dementia Advisor working with the Memory Clinic to support people recently diagnosed with dementia who may not yet meet the threshold for services. Bracknell Forest Council is a National Demonstrator site for this approach.
- A contract shaped by carers and established with the Royal Trust for Carers for emergency support has had a good take up numerically and is reported by carers that it has been well received.
- A Family and Carer Support Worker has been employed through the Stroke Association and has so far worked with 60 individuals and their carers, with referral to first contact being achieved within one week in 85% of cases.

Achievements for 2010/11 and beyond

- We aim to develop the Befriending Scheme with an increased number of volunteers matched to more clients enjoying regular contact and accessing community activities, enabling more independent living.
- We aim to build on current practice with “Bracknell Way”, a coherent model linking Prevention and Self Care, Rehabilitation and Personalisation including health care needs.
- We will evaluate the pilot and rollout of the personalised support programme in accordance with clear project milestones.
- The rollout of personalisation will be a key priority for the Council. This will ensure that people who need support, providers and the voluntary sector are kept informed of progress and how they can continue to help shape events. This will be a crucial aspect to ensure success.

Case study

We have negotiated a fixed rate framework agreement with providers of Domiciliary Care from April this year.

This groundbreaking arrangement will mean providers will be competing for business on quality alone. The price is fixed for all providers participating in the agreement and applies to care provided to direct payment recipients as well as service commissioned from the Council.

Objective 10: Be accountable and provide excellent value for money

With the third-lowest council tax levels of any mainland unitary council in the country, and with nearly half of our key performance indicators ranked among the best in the country, we believe that our services represent exceptional value for money. However, we know that continued efficiency savings will be vital if we are to continue to improve services during a period of tough budget cuts across the public sector. We also need to ensure that we are making the best possible use of all our resources, including our staff, office accommodation and natural resources.

Achievements for 2009/10

- We delivered a balanced budget for the 11th year in succession
- We have improved our procurement practices through the development of guidance and the provision of advice, training and monitoring.
- The Cold Air Containment Unit in the Council's server room was completed and means a saving of £12,000 per year.
- Significant savings in IT were made from more efficient use of resources.
- The Service Efficiency Strategy action plan was delivered which led to more than £300,000 of efficiency savings in last 2 years.
- We were named 'Fleet of the Year' in the 51 to 250 vehicle category at the Fleet News sponsored awards.
- An action plan was created to implement findings from the Green Fleet Review undertaken by the Energy Saving Trust.
- Management and operation of Social Care and Community Transport was transferred to the Integrated Transport Unit, which is now responsible for all vehicle related services within the Council. This has delivered new improved vehicles and made savings.
- We merged the receptions in our town centre office buildings to provide an improved and comprehensive service to residents.
- We were re-accredited with the South East Employers' Member Development Charter which recognises the work we do to ensure that all Councillors have the appropriate skills and knowledge to carry out their role.
- Our postal arrangements were consolidated on to one site generating efficiency savings.
- The employee absence rate for the Council for 2009/10 was 6.3 days per employee; the average rate for all local government employers for the same period was 10.7 days per employee making the Council being some 41% lower than the national average, we are placed firmly in the top quartile for our performance
- In partnership with our partners, we designed and implemented an innovative approach to scrutiny of the Bracknell Forest Partnership. This included forming a Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group, which looked at the work of every Theme Partnership. Our work was shortlisted for the Centre for Public Scrutiny's national 'Good Scrutiny' Awards.
- There has been a significant reduction in the number of high level complaints upheld against the Council. A large improvement in the speed of response to high level complaints has also been achieved, and we continued to learn from the complaints we received. *[Detail on Local Government Ombudsman cases - a substantial reduction of complaints, from 25 last year to 18 in 2009-10. There have been no LGO 'local settlements' in 2009-10, compared to 7 last year. A further large improvement in our speed of responding to LGO complaints, from 22.2 days on average last year, to 13.4 days in 2009-10.]*
- We achieved an award for achieving significant improvements to service (and real savings) through changes to our IT services.

Achievements for 2010/11 and beyond

- Finalise an updated Strategic Risk Register and continue to embed risk management across the organisation.
- Increase the number of council tax-payers paying by direct debit; the most efficient method. Currently 78% of tax-payers now pay by direct debit, one of the highest in the country.
- We are working towards achieving the "Charter Plus" standard, which recognises outstanding work in respect of Member Development.

- We will continue to monitor absence rates and drive the figures down still further by concentrating on individual areas where improvements can be made.
- We aim to implement the corporately tendered Wide Area Network contract; saving £72,000 per year.
- A review of desktop hardware is to be carried out to replace PCs with thin client technology to reduce cost.
- We will continue to ensure high level complaints against the Council receive prompt and fair responses in accordance with the council's service standards.
- We will continue to support the work of the Overview and Scrutiny, helping the Council and its partners continue to improve, by providing an effective and added-value "critical friend" challenge.

Case study

The Council's Key Objectives

In response to an invitation from the Executive, a working group of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission reviewed the Council's key objectives for 2010-11. These objectives set the high level direction for our work over the year, and form the basis of departmental service plans. A number of changes to the key objectives were suggested with most of our suggestions have been accepted. The Council's Chief Executive has commented,

Timothy Wheadon, the Council's Chief Executive said *'In summary, the work of the Commission's working group has been a valuable contribution to planning for the services to be delivered to residents and businesses over the coming year.'*

Objective 11: Promote the borough's economic activity and potential

Our local economy depends on the economic success of the wider geographical area, so we work closely with public and private sector partners across Berkshire and South-East England. We are active in supporting the economy locally, promoting and improving the borough as a place to do business and providing advice and assistance to local companies.

Achievements of 2009/10

- We have delivered on our economic action plan, helping local residents and businesses through the economic downturn.
- A successful business event was held in collaboration with Business Link to assist small and medium sized businesses .
- additional financial help to the Citizens Advice Bureau to provide a better service to our residents .
- a Community TV film for 'Career Springboard' an executive job club, to highlight their services around the Borough.

Achievements for 2010/11 and beyond

- We will update our Economic Development strategy to meet the needs of residents and look to the future is planned
- Continue to promote Bracknell Forest as a great place to do business
- We want to work with our public sector and business partners across the six Berkshire councils to promote our economic buoyancy

- Work with businesses and other Berkshire Councils to set up a Local Enterprise Partnership for the area.
- Publish a Local Investment Plan through the Homes and Communities Agency Single Conversation process to secure funding for housing and infrastructure in Bracknell Forest.

Objectives 12 and 13: Promote workforce skills and limit the impact of the recession

To minimise the impact of the economic downturn on residents, we are working closely with local partners in the voluntary and public sectors to ensure that residents facing redundancy or a reduction in their income receive the advice and support that they need. We want to make sure that local people are well placed to take advantage of job opportunities by supporting them to acquire the skills they need for success in the workplace.

Achievements for 2009/10

- On behalf of the 6 Berkshire Councils, we co-ordinated a bid under the Government's Future Jobs Fund. In Bracknell Forest, this provided placements for 30 young people in Bracknell Forest (and 167 across Berkshire) aged 18 – 24 back into work who had been unemployed for more than 6 months.
- We launched the 'Beat the Credit Crunch' website providing information to the borough's residents during the recession.
- Our 'Grow Our Own' service was developed and is located at the Open Learning Centre in Bracknell, working with organisations and individuals to develop skills leading to paid employment.
- A weekly drop-in service is now available for non-employed and people at risk of redundancy to gain or improve ICT skills, access career advice and guidance and, access the internet and general job search activity at Bracknell Open Learning Centre
- A variety of skills programmes has been launched and work placements specific to sectors of the community that face significant employment barriers for example over 50-year olds, speakers of English as a second language and young people not in education, employment or training.
- 15 adults have achieved Level 1 literacy/numeracy accreditation and 35 have achieved Level 2 accreditation through the programme of family literacy, language and numeracy courses at the Open Learning Centre.

Achievements for 2010/11 and beyond

- Through the 'Grow Our Own' service, we will provide an online 'timebank' to match unemployed people with employers looking for a specific work time to be filled. This opens up opportunities to carers, students, older people and work returners. Clients will register their availability each week and registered employers would be able to select individuals to support their teams on a temporary basis related to business need.
- In conjunction with a major local company, Boehringer Ingelheim, 'Grow Our Own' will set up a showcase networking event for people being made redundant and those setting up their own businesses in the local area. Support organisations will be available to offer advice and guidance. Such as accountants, HR specialists, marketing specialists and financial services.

Case study

The Future Jobs Fund was set up by the last Government to support young people into employment. One of the qualifying criteria was that a minimum of 60 jobs would need to be provided within an organisation. Individually, this number would have been too great for each Berkshire unitary authority, but by working together, the proposal was viable. Bracknell Forest's, Grow Our Own service coordinated a successful bid to Government on behalf of the 6 unitary authorities, together with 13 external partner organisations. Whilst the Government has now stopped the fund it has, nevertheless, provided work experience for 167 young people across Berkshire. As well as providing work, the programme was developed successful young people, through a programme of skills and training, provided by each council's adult learning service.

DRAFT

Appendix A – Council Finances

Introduction

Being a Unitary Council, we are required by legislation to account for our expenditure in two distinct categories:

General Fund Revenue Account – This includes day to day spending on all services. Expenditure is financed mainly from Government Grant (Revenue Support Grant), Business Rate income, charges to users of services, and Council Tax.

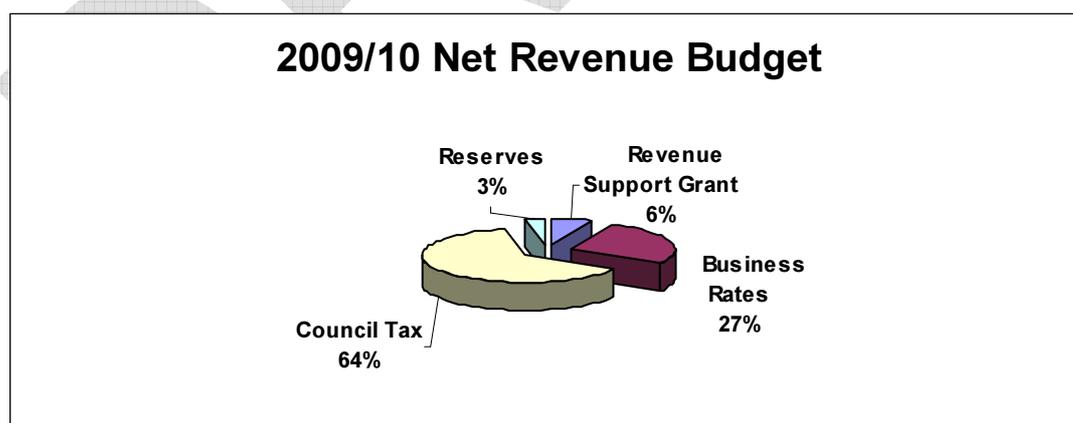
Capital – All improvements and enhancements to our assets are included in this category. This expenditure is financed partly from the sale of capital assets, Government Grant support, contributions from developers and borrowing from internal funds.

Outturn 2009/10

General Fund

The Council, at its meeting on 25 February 2009, set a revenue budget for the 2009/10 financial year of £74.218m. The total authorised General Fund net expenditure for the 2009/10 financial year was £76.818m (including parish precepts of £2.600m). Further increases to service budgets can be approved if they are financed from earmarked reserves. When these further budgets are approved an equivalent sum is transferred from the earmarked reserves to the revenue account. In 2009/10 net transfers totalling £1.586m have been approved from reserves. These include funding from the Cost of Structural Change Reserve, S106 contributions and Carry Forwards. These transfers do not have an impact on the overall budget.

This expenditure was to be met by Government Grant (Revenue Support Grant), Business Rates, Council Tax and the use of reserves, as shown in the chart below.



The following table compares actual outturn expenditure incurred with the amended budgets for the year for the General Fund. This table reflects our departmental structure during 2009/10, which is the basis for the internal management of performance against budgets. We reorganised during 2009/10 with the Social Care and Learning Department being replaced by two new departments for Children, Young People and Learning and Adult Social Care and Health.

GENERAL FUND	Original	Latest	Actual	Variance
	Budget	Budget	£000's	£000's
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Corporate Services (including Chief Executive's)	9,886	8,805	8,644	(161)
Children, Young People and Learning	21,490	36,034	35,779	(255)
Adult Social Care and Health	26,025	26,884	25,233	(1,651)
Environment, Culture & Communities	34,184	36,348	35,977	(371)
Net cost of General Fund services	91,585	108,071	105,633	(2,438)
Exceptional item – VAT refunds (see below)	0	0	(2,583)	(2,583)
Capital Charges	(8,365)	(27,067)	(27,067)	0
Pension Adjustment	(3,027)	298	298	0
Other Miscellaneous Services	(91)	95	389	294
Interest Receipts	(1,302)	(1,265)	(948)	317
Interest Payable	0	345	345	0
Debt Financing Charges	50	362	362	0
Levying Bodies	84	97	97	0
Contribution from Capital Resources	(300)	(300)	0	300
Contingency Provision	390	0	0	0
Area Based Grant	(4,680)	(4,706)	(4,706)	0
Performance Reward Grant	0	0	(336)	(336)
Net Budget Requirement	74,344	75,930	71,484	(4,446)
Parish Precepts	2,600	2,600	2,600	0
Contributions to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	(126)	(1,712)	2,022	3,734
Amount to be met from Government Grants and Local Taxation	76,818	76,818	76,106	(712)
Resources To Finance Above				
Council Tax Payers	(48,665)	(48,665)	(48,665)	0
Collection Fund Surplus	(169)	(169)	(169)	0
Revenue Support Grant	(4,827)	(4,827)	(4,827)	0
National Non Domestic Rates	(20,915)	(20,915)	(20,915)	0
Contribution to/(from) General Reserves	(2,242)	(2,242)	(1,530)	712
Total Resources	(76,818)	(76,818)	(76,106)	712

Changes in VAT legislation resulted in a number of services being reclassified from standard rated to exempt for VAT purposes. Initially, we were only able to reclaim overpaid tax for the previous 3 years but this 3 year cap was successfully challenged in court cases collectively known as Conde Nast/Fleming. As a result a number of claims were submitted to try and claim back overpaid VAT plus interest for earlier years (going back to 1973 when VAT was introduced). The majority of claims have now been settled and as a consequence we received the sum of £2.583m (including interest but after fees) in 2009/10. These VAT repayments have been treated as an exceptional item in the accounts.

Impairments led to an increase of £15.7m in service department budgets since the original budget was approved. These resulted from capital expenditure not adding value to assets (£6.5m) and the downward revaluation of assets (£9.2m). Impairments are reversed out of the accounts and therefore there is no net change to the overall budget.

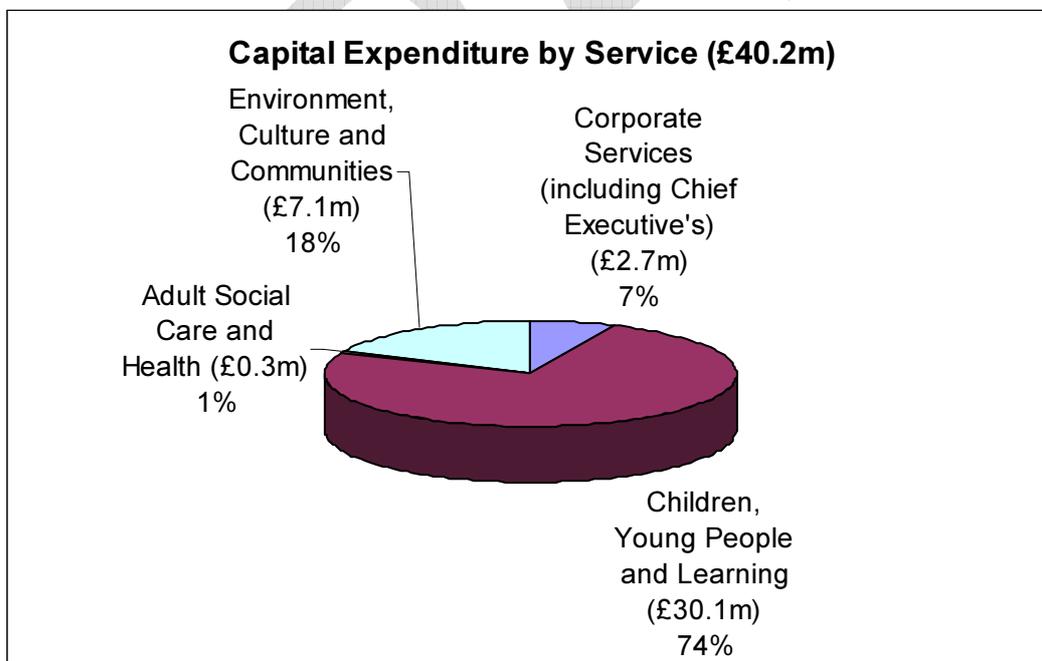
Our approach to budget monitoring is robust and effective, demonstrated by the fact that we have never overspent our revenue budget since becoming a unitary authority in 1998. From the above it can be seen that an under spend occurred on the General Fund, causing the use of general reserves to be £0.712m less than budgeted after allowing for transfers from earmarked reserves. This means that more resources are available to assist us with future year's budgets.

Capital

We approved a capital programme of £51.3m for 2009/10, plus a further £13.5m carried forward from 2008/09

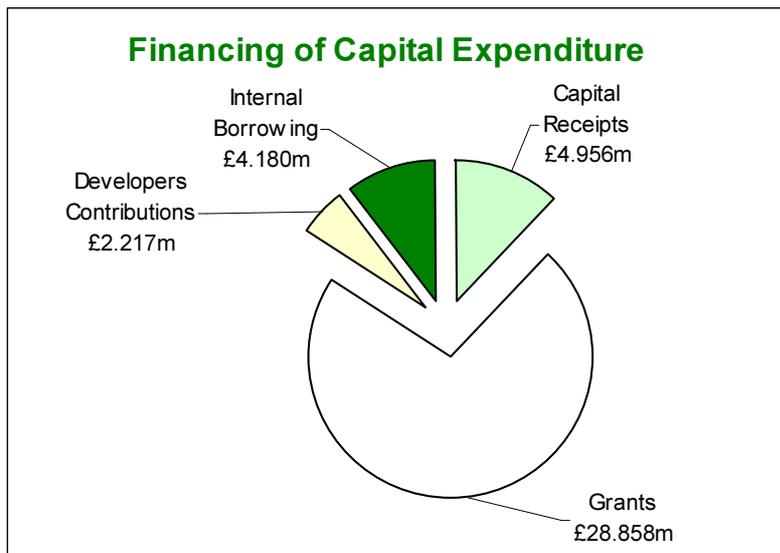
We actually spent £40.2m on capital projects in 2009/10 to maintain and enhance its assets. Many schemes included in the capital programme are both technically and logistically complex to implement. Issues such as planning approvals, land transfers and inclement weather can all lead to unavoidable delays. In addition, their financial scale requires a lengthy tender process to ensure the best price is obtained prior to letting the contract. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to complete such schemes within the financial year for which they are approved. We regularly review progress on the capital programme through its budget monitoring during the year and has established cash budget profiles to assist this.

The following chart illustrates the expenditure by service.



£20.8m of the total was spent on the Garth Hill School rebuild.

The capital programme was funded as follows:



Overall the Council was debt free at 31 March 2010 and did not need to borrow externally to finance capital expenditure during 2009/10 (further details are shown in the body of the Statement of Accounts).

More detailed financial information on the 2009/10 outturn is contained in the Council's Statement of Accounts. For copies of this or more detailed information please contact in the first instance Alan Nash, Chief Officer: Financial Services on 01344 352180 (email alan.nash@bracknell-forest.gov.uk) or Arthur Parker, Chief Accountant on 01344 352158 (email arthur.parker@bracknell-forest.gov.uk).

Budget 2010/11

General Fund

Due to the global recession we were faced with unprecedented pressure on our resources this year. The proposed budget package therefore only addresses pressures arising from the impact of the recession, increases in the number of vulnerable clients or new statutory duties stemming from Lord Laming's inquiry into safeguarding. All other desirable service developments have been deferred. As in previous years, economies have focused as far as possible on central and departmental support rather than on front line services. However after 10 years of back office rationalisations, realising total savings in excess of £20m, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find further savings in these areas, which would not compromise our ability to function effectively. Consequently it has been necessary to look at some reductions in front line services. The medium term financial strategy to bring spending to a level that can be sustained by annually generated revenue remains the priority but this has been affected by the impact of the recession.

Spending on schools and school related functions such as Special Educational Needs placements made outside of the borough are funded by a specific Dedicated Schools Grant (£65.0m).

In 2010/11 we plan to spend £236m on services. A significant part of this expenditure is funded from income that we make from commercial (rather than housing) rents, sales and fees and charges for services. We also receive a number of government grants and contributions from other local authorities and agencies for individual services including funding for schools.

Our formal budget requirement, after allowing for the income sources above, is £74.0m. This remaining amount is financed by:-

	£m
Council Tax	47.9
Business Rates	22.8
Revenue Support Grant	3.3
Total	74.0

General Fund Revenue Budget Summary 2010/11

	Gross Expenditure	Income	2010/11 Budget
Service Department	£'000	£'000	£'000
Corporate Services (incl. Chief Executive's)	15,426	8,503	6,923
Children, Young People and Learning	102,292	82,536	19,756
Adult Social Care and Health	40,800	14,733	26,067
Environment, Culture and Communities	76,993	40,625	36,368
Cost of Services	235,511	146,397	89,114
Capital Financing Charges			(8,061)
Levying Bodies			87
Debt Financing Charges			372
Interest Receipts			(659)
Contingency			1,000
Contribution from Earmarked Reserves			(350)
Reversal of notional pension adjustment			(557)
Area Based Grant			(6,359)
Total Expenditure			74,587
Use of General Fund Balances			(557)
Bracknell Forest's Budget Requirement			74,030

Capital Expenditure

In accordance with its Corporate Capital Strategy we have developed a three year capital programme covering the period 2010/11 to 2012/13. In setting the three-year programme, we have agreed to fund £8.069m of new schemes for 2010/11 from borrowing acknowledging that it is unlikely that we would need to borrow externally as it will be able to utilise existing investments that represent our reserves and balances. In addition, we recommended that an additional budget of £1m be approved for "Invest to Save" schemes.

As a result of the transfer of the Council's housing stock to Bracknell Forest Homes there is no Housing Improvement Programme in the Capital Programme. We have committed ourselves to spending 75% of the available capital receipt from the transfer (£17.25m) to fund new affordable housing and the 2010/11 to 2012/13 programme includes an allocation of £9.3m, with £1.28m earmarked for 2010/11.

Details of the approved three-year capital programme for 2010/11 to 2012/13 (including funding from external grants and contributions) are shown below:

	2010/11 (excluding carry forwards)	2011/12	2012/13
Service Department	£'000	£'000	£'000
Corporate Services/Council Wide	3,239	3,526	3,395
Children, Young People and Learning	22,409	5,379	2,920
Adult Social Care and Health	530	0	0
Environment, Culture and Communities	9,920	10,262	9,693
Total	36,098	19,167	16,008

Given the pressure on the revenue budget, the programme for 2011/12-2012/13 needs to be seen as indicative and will need to be reviewed comprehensively along with any potential new schemes.

More detailed financial information is contained in the "Financial Plans and Budgets Supporting Information" booklet which was presented to Council on 3 March 2010. For copies of this or more detailed information please contact in the first instance Alan Nash, Chief Officer: Financial Services on 01344 352180 (email alan.nash@bracknell-forest.gov.uk) or Arthur Parker, Chief Accountant on 01344 352158 (email arthur.parker@bracknell-forest.gov.uk).

Appendix B – Delivery against the Council’s objectives set in 2007 - Status at March 2010

To be added

DRAFT